



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL CLIMATE, AND EQUITY: HOW ONE DISTRICT RESPONDS TO STUDENT & FAMILY VOICE

### ABOUT QUINCY

In the heart of Washington state, Quincy School District (QSD) serves nearly 3,000 students across seven school sites. The district serves a far-flung geographic region covering approximately 450 square miles, including both agricultural communities and a city.

With QSD's mission to support all students for post-secondary success, listening to students and their parents has become an essential practice. "As school and district leaders, we care about what students and families are experiencing," says Superintendent John Boyd. "YouthTruth surveys are unique tools that allow us to gather feedback and insight from stakeholders in a way that we really couldn't before."

Both student and family voices have been a priority for the district. In the words of Assistant Superintendent Nik Bergman: "YouthTruth truly gives students a seat at the table. It's their future we're impacting, and they should be included in the decision-making process."



### QUINCY AT A GLANCE

**Location**

Quincy, Washington

**Schools**

4 elementary schools  
1 junior high school  
2 high schools

**Demographics**

2,923 students  
88% students of color  
83% FRPL  
42% English Language Learners

**YouthTruth Resources**

Overall School Experience Student Survey  
(for grades 3-12)

YouthTruth Family Survey  
(for all parents/guardians in the district)

Group Webinars  
(for school and district cabinet teams)

### IN THE WORDS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

*"This is the third district in which I have used YouthTruth. I have seen how the tool can serve as a catalyst to leverage change in schools and school systems.*

*The bottom line is that educators care about what students think, we just don't always do a good job of developing systems to check in with students on their perceptions, and we don't provide feedback loops to make them feel like they have a say in their education.*

*YouthTruth has provided us with the information and expertise to better understand our students, develop a feedback loop, and make plans to improve. We repeat the surveys each year to monitor improvement at both the district and school level."*

- Superintendent John L. Boyd



## QUINCY JUNIOR HIGH uses the data for professional development.

Principal Scott Ramsey from Quincy Junior High has developed a practice of modeling self-reflection and strategic inquiry when it comes to feedback. “It’s easy for the reaction to be one of dismissiveness, when you’re getting difficult feedback,” said Ramsey. “Especially when you’re looking around the room and know how hard both you and the person next to you are working, less positive feedback can be tough to stomach. But this feedback is what students have to say about their experiences, and it’s important that we respect their unique insights and listen to what they have to say.”



A data debrief activity that works well for the Quincy Junior High Team is a Gallery Walk. Here’s their recipe for the activity:

### GALLERY WALK: DIVING INTO THE DATA

#### WHEN?

During all-staff meetings

#### WHO?

All teachers, non-instructional staff, and school administrators

#### TIME NEEDED

45 minutes

#### BENEFITS OF THIS APPROACH

- It models transparency and shared ownership of the school's climate
- It is interactive and gets participants out of their chairs and away from their computers
- It results in a set of actions

### WEEK ONE

#### STEP 1: SET UP

Set up posters around the room highlighting specific questions and ratings from your YouthTruth data, including the national and district comparisons.

#### STEP 2: INQUIRE

Invite participants to walk around the room and simply absorb the data. Encourage them to orient themselves to the data and ask questions.

### WEEK TWO

#### STEP 3: REFLECT

Return to the posters. Next to each question, add a T-chart. Rotating through in small groups, have participants fill out the two sides of the T-chart,

- *In what ways are we already addressing this particular question or topic?*
- *What are things we could be doing to better address this topic?*

#### STEP 4: PLAN

As a group, identify the specific, actionable steps that you want to prioritize, or additional questions you want to answer in order to identify a plan for improvement.

## PIONEER ELEMENTARY uses the data to strengthen relationships with parents.

When Alesha Porter, principal of Pioneer Elementary, got her YouthTruth family feedback back, she was excited to dive in. "Gathering feedback is so important for making sure you're on track," says Porter. "It encourages you to identify areas for improvement and helps you understand how other stakeholders are experiencing the school."

Alesha and her team were also eager to examine the feedback by different respondent demographics, such as parent level of education and primary language spoken in the home.



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When disaggregating by language spoken at home, the Pioneer team found that families who primarily spoke English had less positive perceptions of the school than families who primarily spoke Spanish at home. In particular, the gap was most notable in family responses about school safety. "When we dove deeper, we found that a lot of the issue was communication," says Porter. "Many parents just did not know about the various programs and things we were doing around the school."

Based on that feedback, school leaders followed up with parents. In the school newsletter, the YouthTruth findings were presented, alongside clear steps that school leaders were taking, such as increasing the visibility of adults on the playground by providing them with clearly marked vests. The newsletter also highlighted existing programs that parents might not have had awareness of, such as the ongoing implementation of a PBIS system that was showing early signs of success.

### EXPLORING BY SUBGROUPS

Disaggregating data by demographic subgroups can help educators understand how experiences may vary within the same district or even the same school. For school and district leaders on a mission to meet each student or parent where they are, having data that identifies where there are differences and by how much is key.

The YouthTruth Family Survey invites parent and guardians to answer various demographic questions, such as:

- What grade is your child in?
- What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- What is the primary language spoken in your home?
- At school, is your child able to receive lunch for free or at a lower price?

## GEORGE ELEMENTARY uses feedback to create a safer school climate.



Curt Schutzmann, principal of George Elementary, uses family feedback to see the school through a new lens. “We were able to look at how we were doing as a school from the eyes of a parent,” says Schutzmann. “That is really valuable information. We were able to take that as a staff and identify things we were proud of, and some things that we could pay more attention to and work to improve as a school.”

As a full staff, teachers and administrators reviewed their feedback data and identified specific areas of interest. One area that stood out was family concerns about perceptions of bullying.

As a result, Schutzmann and the George Elementary team took specific steps to increase awareness of and access to resources that improve school climate and feelings of safety.



### ***Creating a common understanding of bullying.***

To create a common understanding of bullying, posters that define bullying and outline what students can do when they see or experience bullying were put up throughout the school.



### ***Engaging students in conflict management training.***

The school also increased implementation of the [Kelso's Choice](#) trainings, which teach conflict management skills to children.



### ***Closing the feedback loop with parents.***

In addition, Schutzmann dedicated a section of the monthly parent newsletter to reflect on the concerns that had been raised in the survey. He also highlighted the specific steps that were being taken in response to that feedback.

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## THE DISTRICT OFFICE uses student feedback to drive equity.

At the district level, QSD has incorporated perception data into their equity work. Outcome data that they identified to monitor included chronic absenteeism rates, exclusionary discipline rates, kindergarten preparedness, and family and student perception data.

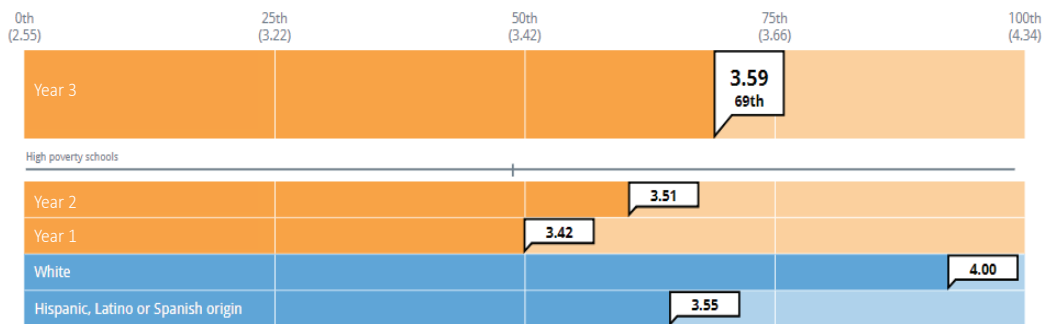
“Asking for feedback from students and families is a vital part of our equity work,” explains Superintendent John Boyd. “Part of equity is listening — and listening to everyone. We believe that it is essential to be in dialogue with all stakeholders. That’s how you get better data and insight from which to take action.”



Equitable access to high-quality college and career readiness programs is a district priority. While gains were made year-over-year overall, the student feedback indicated that some students were benefiting from improvements more than others. When district leaders disaggregated their student feedback by students’ self-reported race/ethnicity, they found that white students felt much more positively about their college and career readiness than Hispanic/Latino students.

### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

*Describes the degree to which students feel equipped to pursue college and careers.*



The data indicated that white students were more likely to take advantage of counseling about careers, college financing, applying to college, and admission requirements. White students also felt more positively than their Hispanic/Latino peers that their school helped them develop the skills and knowledge they will need for college-level classes.

**For school and district leaders, these gaps in perceptions and experiences were concerning — and raised some good, but tough, questions.**

Opportunities for college counseling and college prep were available, but did all students know about these opportunities? Did Hispanic/Latino students feel that they belonged in those spaces and conversations centered around college? Were there other barriers (such as time, primary language spoken, etc.) in the way of *all* students taking advantage of these support services?

Equipped with this feedback, QSD leaders targeted more resources to college access and counseling support for Hispanic/Latino students. They will continue to use student and stakeholder feedback to monitor progress.





## ABOUT NIK BERGMAN

### Assistant Superintendent

Nik Bergman is the Assistant Superintendent of Quincy School District. He previously served as the principal of Pioneer Elementary and George Elementary, as well as the K-12 Summer School Director and Quincy Junior High School Dean of Students. He received a Bachelors degree in Education in Social Studies from Eastern Washington University and an ESL Certificate from Whitworth College. He received his Professional Teaching Certificate, Masters in Educational Leadership, and Superintendent Credential from Washington State University.



## ABOUT JOHN BOYD

### Superintendent

John Boyd is the Superintendent of Quincy School District. Prior to coming to Quincy, he served as the Leadership Executive Director at Highline School District. He has teaching and administrative experience at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, including English Language Learners and bilingual instruction. He received his Bachelors degree in Spanish from the University of Montana and his Masters of Education, Curriculum, and Instruction from Western Washington University. He received his Superintendent Credential from Washington State University.



## ABOUT ALESHA PORTER

### Principal, Pioneer Elementary

Alesha Porter is the principal of Pioneer Elementary. She is a Quincy native, and prior to becoming principal she served as a second and third grade teacher at Pioneer Elementary. In her time as a principal, she has realized the importance of developing strong relationships with families and community members.



## ABOUT SCOTT RAMSEY

### Principal, Quincy Junior High School

Scott Ramsey is the principal of Quincy Junior High School. He has been with Quincy Junior High for 16 years and is committed to ensuring that students gain the skills necessary to be successful. He received a Bachelors degree in History from Washington State University and a M.Ed from Central Washington University.



## ABOUT CURT SCHUTZMANN

### Principal, George Elementary

Curt Schutzmann is the principal of George Elementary. He previously served as vice principal at both the middle school and elementary school levels. He also served as a physical education teacher and Dean of Students.

## ABOUT YOUTHTRUTH

YouthTruth is a national nonprofit that harnesses student and stakeholder perceptions to help educators accelerate improvements. Through validated survey instruments and tailored advisory services, YouthTruth partners with schools, districts, states, and educational organizations to enhance learning for all students. For a tour of our interactive, online reports, sign up to join a webinar here: [www.youthtruthsurvey.org/get-started/#webinar](http://www.youthtruthsurvey.org/get-started/#webinar).

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