

## MEMO

To: Elana Elster & MS54 Equity Team  
From: Judy Scott-Clayton  
RE: Summary of relevant NYC School Survey Data  
Date: January 4, 2018

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This memo summarizes results from the NYC School Surveys that may be particularly relevant to the work of the MS54 Equity Team. Data in this summary are based on the most recent available school survey results (2017-18), with responses from 43 teachers (83%), 814 students (96%), and 490 parents (61%). All data are publicly available via the online NYC School Quality Guide.

The rubric NYC uses for assessing school conditions and practices, called the Framework for Great Schools, has six elements: Rigorous Instruction, Supportive Environment, Collaborative Teachers, Effective School Leadership, Strong Family-Community Ties, and Trust. This summary will focus primarily on the three elements most relevant for the focus of the Equity Team:

- **Supportive Environment.** “The school establishes a classroom and school culture where students feel safe, supported, and challenged by their teachers and peers.”
- **Strong Family-Community Ties.** “School leadership brings resources from the community into the school building by welcoming, encouraging, and developing partnerships with families, businesses, and community-based organizations.”
- **Trust.** “Everyone works toward the shared goal of improving student outcomes, preparing students for success in school and beyond. Across the school community, there is respect. School staff, parents, students and administrators value each other.”<sup>1</sup>

The summary will also draw upon a few items from other elements such as “cultural awareness and inclusive classroom instruction” (part of Collaborative Teaching) and responses to additional survey questions that are not incorporated into any of the specific framework elements, but which are relevant for the Equity Team’s interests.

It can be difficult to interpret a given survey result in isolation. For example, if 71% of Booker T. students agree that school discipline is applied fairly, is that a “good” number or not? School survey responses across the board are generally positive, especially at a school like Booker T. While it may be difficult to read much into the meaning of a given response level on its own, district-level averages can provide a useful baseline for comparison. Thus, in this summary I will pay most attention to those survey questions where responses appear to differ substantially from district-level averages. For these questions, I will also compare Booker T responses to those at a set of comparison District 3 middle schools.

Most of these survey questions are also available for prior years so we could do some additional analysis of trends for selected items, if desired.

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<sup>1</sup> All of these framework terms and definitions are taken from <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/vision-and-mission/framework-for-great-schools>.

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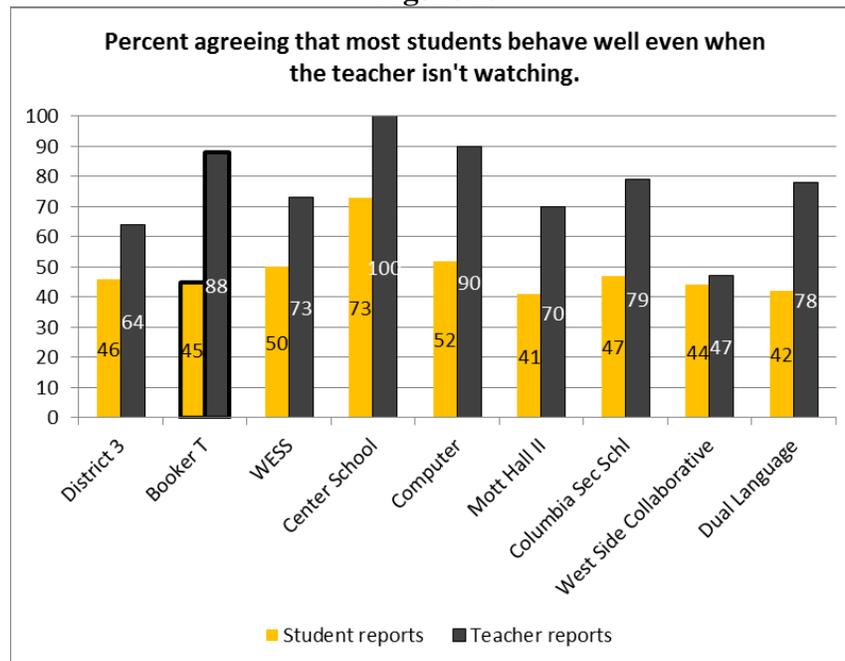
## Supportive Environment

Survey items in this area are grouped into six elements: classroom behavior, guidance, peer support for academic work, personal attention and support, safety, and social-emotional. However, since the overall scores for each of these elements are not very informative, I dig into some specific survey questions under each element below.

*Classroom behavior.* The student and teacher surveys include several questions regarding student behavior in the classroom, such as whether or not most students listen carefully, follow the rules, pay attention, and behave well even when the teacher isn't watching. Student reports of positive classroom behavior were similar to or somewhat above district averages across these questions (from 1 percentage point below to 6 points above), while teacher reports were 8-24 percentage points higher than district average reports.

Teachers at Booker T, like teachers district-wide, generally have a much more positive view of student behavior than the students have themselves. Yet the teacher-student behavior perception gap is particularly large at Booker T, as shown in Figure 1 below, which compares student and teacher reports on the question of whether students “behave well in class even when the teacher isn't watching.” While 88% of teachers agreed, only 45% of students did so – a 43 percentage point gap that was larger at Booker T than any of the comparison middle schools.

**Figure 1.**



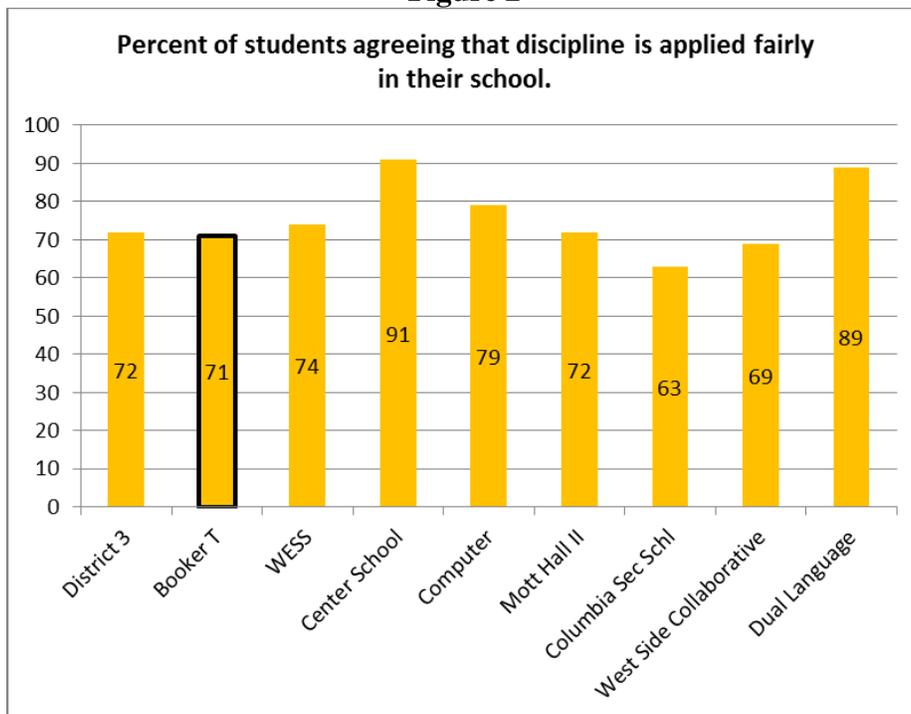
*Guidance.* This element is based on only three questions from the student survey pertaining to information and guidance around the high school application process. Booker T students are about as likely as other students to agree with these statements (91% at Booker T versus 90-91% district-wide).

*Peer support for academic work.* This element is based on four questions from the student survey in which students are asked their perception of how “most students” at their school feel about certain academic behaviors, such as coming to school, paying attention in class, doing homework, and getting good grades. Unsurprisingly, Booker T students perceive strong positive norms for academic work, with agreement rates consistently 5-9 percentage points higher than district averages (63-86% of Booker T students agreed with each statement, compared to 58-77% district-wide).

*Personal attention and support.* This element is based on five questions from the student survey, asking about students’ perceptions of their teachers’ attention and support. For example, questions ask whether students agree or disagree that teachers help them catch up if they are behind, teachers notice if they have trouble learning something, give them specific suggestions about how they can improve, explain things in a different way if they don’t understand, and support them when they are upset. Student agreement with these statements at Booker T ranged from 61-71% with no clear difference from district averages (which ranged from 56-73%).

*Safety.* This element includes one student survey question on whether school discipline is applied fairly, and four student survey questions about perceptions of safety in and around the school. Like students elsewhere in District 3, Booker T students feel exceptionally safe at school and on the way to school (90-98% agreeing they feel safe compared to 87-92% district-wide), but somewhat less safe outside around their school (78% versus 83% district-wide). As shown in Figure 2 below, most but not all students at Booker T, like students elsewhere in District 3, agree that school discipline is applied fairly.

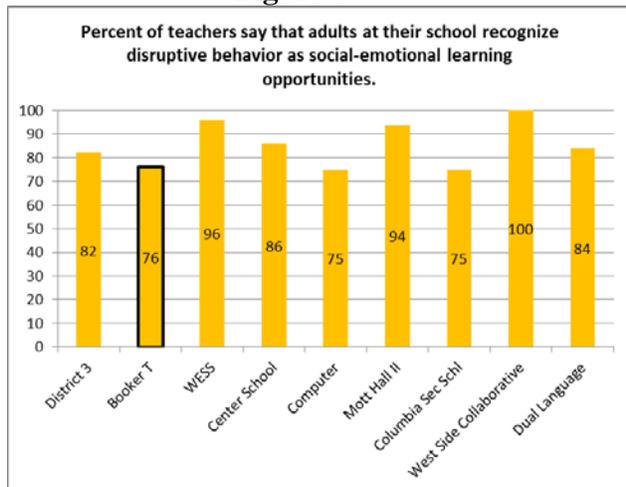
**Figure 2**



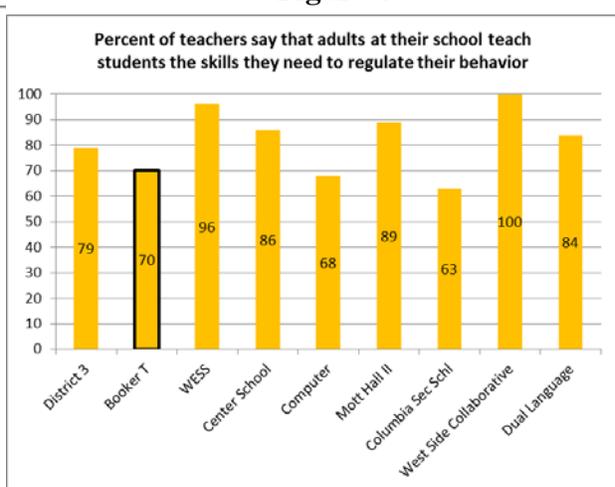
*Social-emotional.* This element includes eight teacher-survey questions asking teachers about whether the adults at the school help students develop skills to surmount academic obstacles and regulate their behavior, promote critical thinking and self-advocacy, express high expectations, etc. Teacher responses at Booker T and district-wide are very positive, ranging from 70-95% at Booker T depending on the question, versus 79-93% district-wide. For three of the more academically oriented questions (overcoming challenging homework, high academic standards, critical thinking), Booker T teachers were at or slightly above the district average (93-95% agreement versus 90-93% agreement district-wide), but on the other five items, Booker T teachers were somewhat less positive than average.

For example, as shown in Figures 3-5 below, only 76% of Booker T teachers agreed that adults at the school “recognize disruptive behavior as social-emotional learning opportunities” (versus 82% district-wide) and only 70% agreed that adults at the school “teach students the skills they need to regulate their behavior” (compared to 79% district-wide).

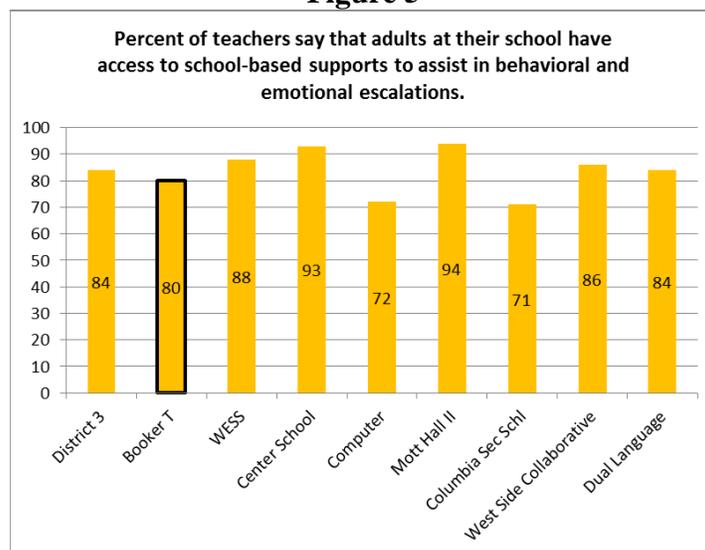
**Figure 3**



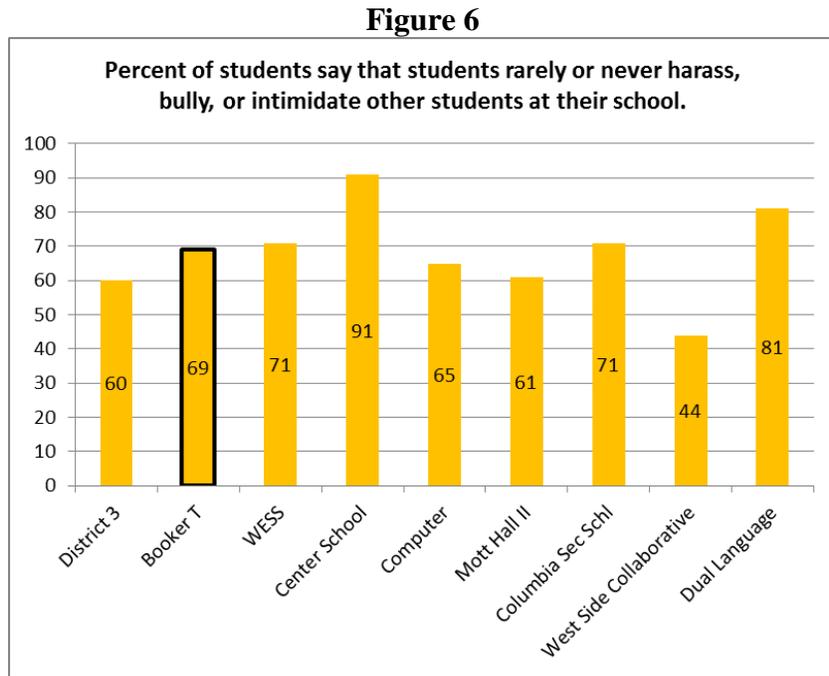
**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



*Preventing Bullying.* New in the 2017-18 student survey, this element includes four questions on how frequently students observe bullying overall, and separately based on different factors. Booker T students reports are much more likely to report students “rarely or never” harass, bully, or intimidate other students (69% versus 60% district-wide) and this holds for bullying based on specified factors as well (race/ethnicity/religion, gender/gender expression, or other). As shown in Figure 6, compared to other District 3 middle schools, Booker T student reports are in the middle of the range.



**Strong Family-Community Ties**

This factor has two elements: outreach to parents and parent involvement, based primarily on the parent survey with some teacher survey questions incorporated as well.

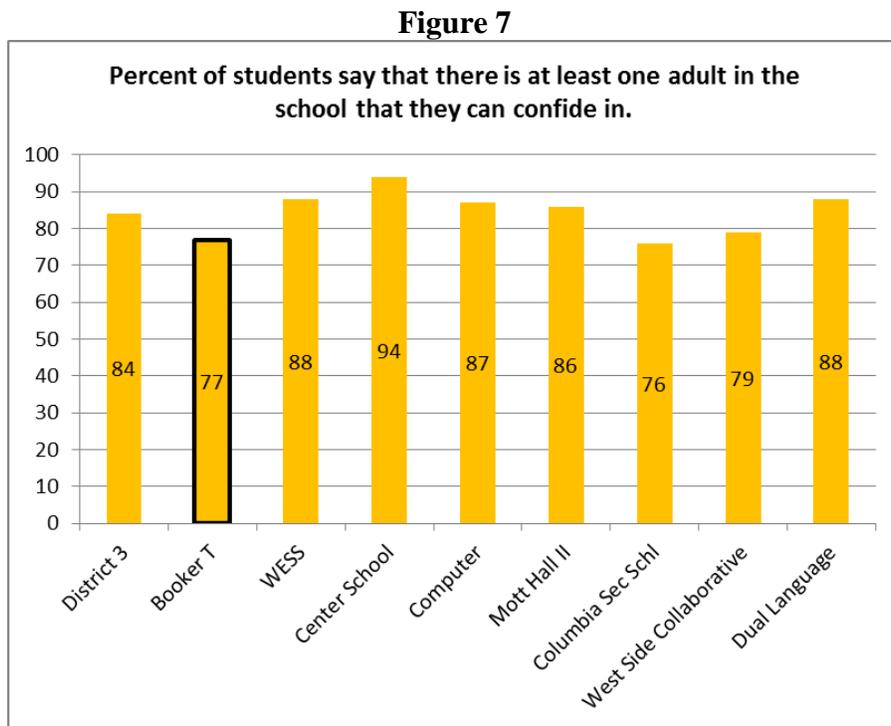
*Outreach to parents.* This element includes six parent survey questions and four teacher survey questions around teacher-parent interactions and the general quality of parent-school communications. Responses across the board were very positive, ranging from 84-98% positive among parents (at or only very slightly below district averages), and 95-100% positive among teachers.

*Parent involvement in school.* This includes five parent survey questions about opportunities to volunteer, communication with teachers, and participation in school events and conferences. Again responses are very positive, ranging from 91-99% parent agreement with each positive statement, all at or above district averages. The 91% of parents agreeing that have had the opportunity to volunteer time to the school is well above the 81% district average.

## Trust

This factor has a number of elements on trust between parents and teachers, parents and principal, students and teachers, teachers and principal, and teachers with other teachers. While all of these are important, the results for most of these are simply not that interesting because all of the teacher and parent-reported items are so high (in the 90s) across the board! The only student-reported element, student-teacher trust, is also the only one where we see anything less than near-perfect positivity, hence it is the only one I delve deeper into below.

*Student-teacher trust.* This element includes five questions from the student survey, with responses ranging from 60-89% positive. Four ask students whether teachers always listen to their ideas (72%), do what they say they'll do (60%), give reasons for their rules (78%), and treat them with respect (89%). The last two of these were in line with district averages while the first two were about 7 percentage points below average. Another question asks more generally whether there is at least one adult at the school the student can confide in. As shown in Figure 7 below, Booker T students are somewhat less positive on this question than the district average (77% versus 84% district-wide), and are also low relative to this set of comparison schools.



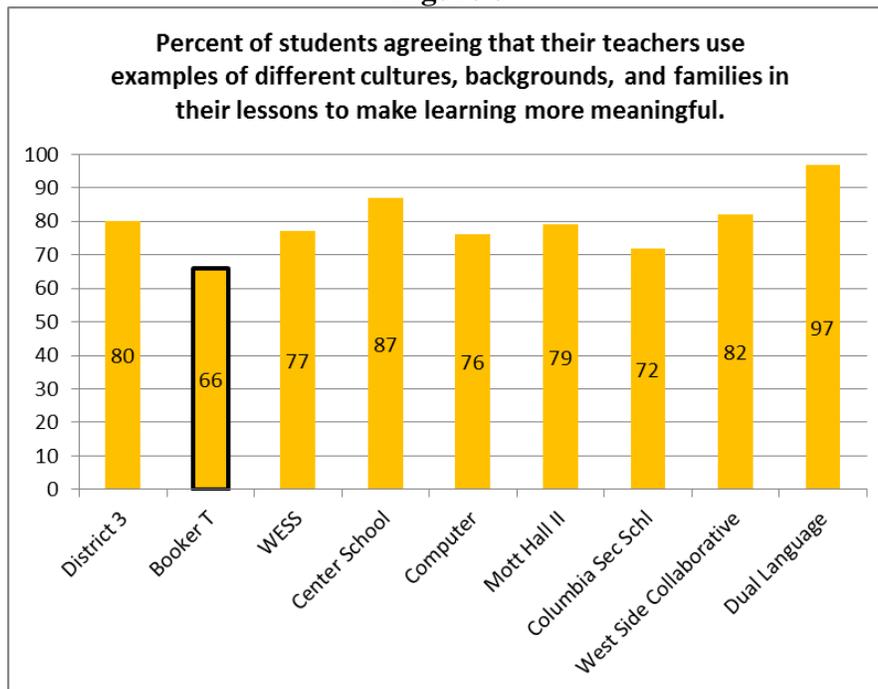
## Additional Elements & Questions

The “Cultural Awareness and Inclusive Classroom Instruction” element (under Collaborative Teaching) includes six student survey questions and eight teacher survey questions, focused around teachers’ use of diverse examples, relevance of lessons to everyday experience, and respect for different cultures. The percentage of teachers responding positively to the teacher survey questions range from mid-80s to upper-90s at Booker T and are generally close to

district-wide averages. Student responses are a bit less positive but still generally in line with district-wide averages, ranging from mid-70s to upper-90s.

There is one exception: only 66% of Booker T students agreed that their teachers use examples of different cultures, backgrounds, and families in their lessons to make learning more meaningful (compared to 80% of students district-wide). This is also noticeably lower than the next lowest percentage among the set of comparison schools. On the other hand, 87% of Booker T students agreed that they see “people of many races, ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds represented in the curriculum,” which is not very different from the district average of 90% so it is unclear why students’ responses regarding teachers’ examples are so much lower than average.

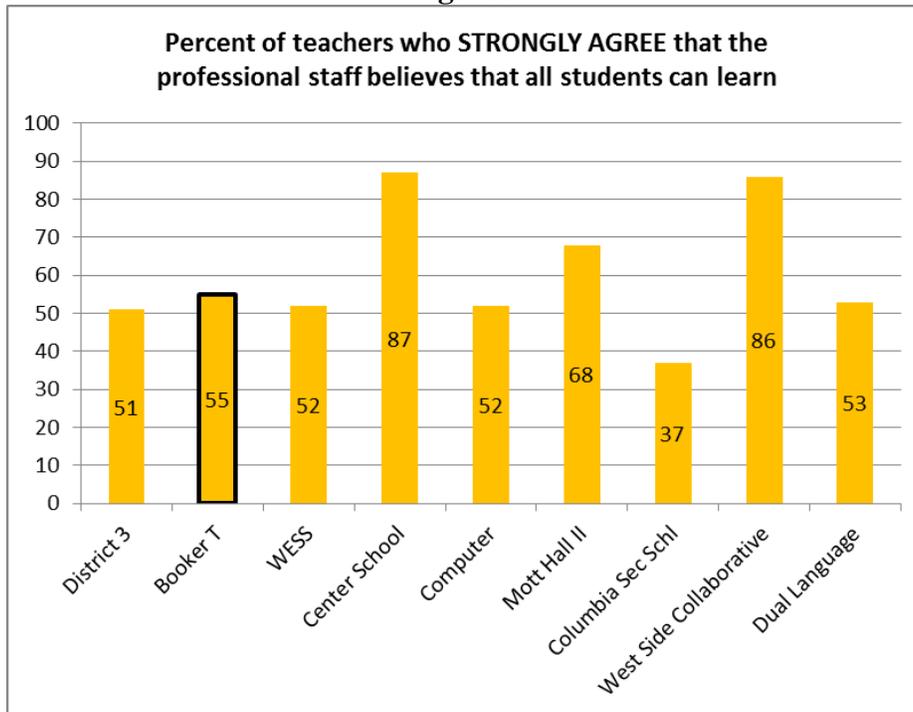
**Figure 8**



Finally, the School Surveys include a number of questions that are not incorporated into any of the framework elements but still may be of interest to the Equity Team. In Figures 9-11 below, I tabulate responses for Booker T versus District 3 overall and for selected comparison schools.

Figure 9 examines teacher perceptions of whether staff at the school believe all students can learn, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Note the question is not asking about the teacher’s own beliefs, but her *perception of other staff’s beliefs* at the school (this way of asking the question is thought to elicit more honest responses). In any case, nearly all teachers (95%) district-wide and at Booker T agreed with this statement, so in Figure 9, I focus on the percentage of teachers who *strongly* agreed with the statement. At 55% strongly agreeing, Booker T is slightly above the district average and in the middle of this set of comparison schools.

**Figure 9**

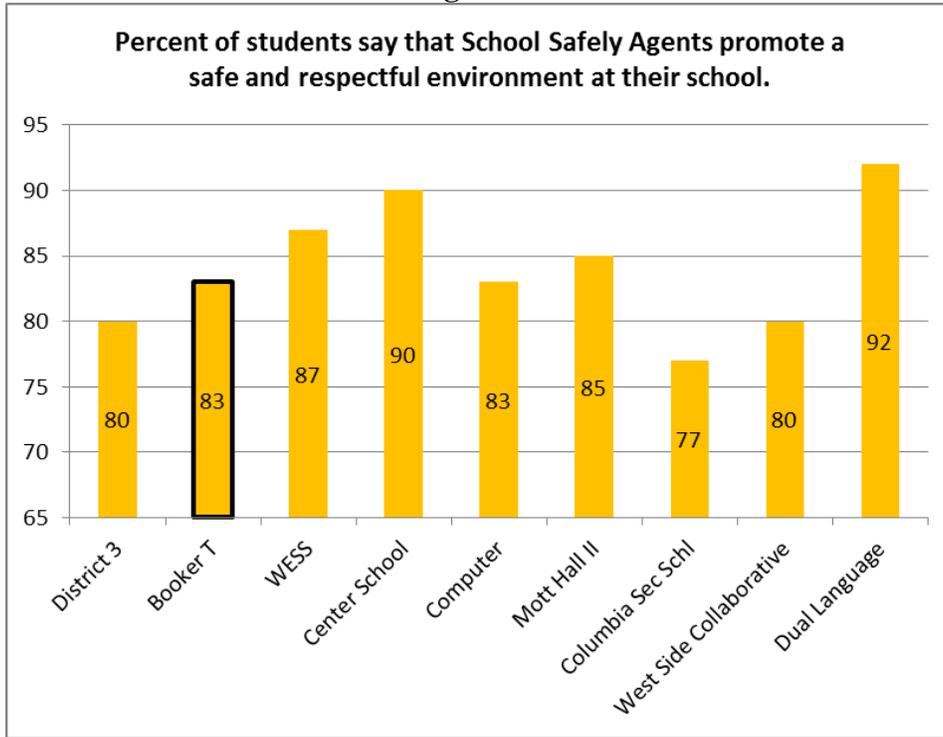


Similarly, regarding student reports on School Safety Agents, Booker T is slightly above the district average and in the middle of the set of comparison schools, as shown in Figure 10 (see next page). Finally, when it comes to developing students' interests outside academics, Figure 11 shows that Booker T is slightly above the district average but towards the low end of the comparison set of schools.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This summary has explored the 2017-18 NYC School Survey Results with a focus on topics of interest to the Equity Team. In general, student, teacher, and parent responses to survey questions are overwhelmingly positive, and in many or even most areas covered, Booker T responses are at or above district averages. Of course, this still leaves room for improvement: about 3 in 10 Booker T students still disagree that discipline is applied fairly, and about 3 in 10 reported that students harass, bully, or intimidate other students some or most of the time. In addition, Booker T students are less likely than students elsewhere in the district to agree that their teachers present a diverse range of examples in the classroom, and are less likely to agree that the school encourages them to develop their skills outside academics. Finally, Booker T teachers report less emphasis on certain aspects of social-emotional learning. This could be because teachers view students as having few discipline issues and having already mastered behavior regulation; however, teachers also seem to have a much rosier view of student behavior than students themselves.

**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**

