

Lincoln Options Parent Survey 2007

Survey Results September 24, 2007

Introduction

The Parent Partnership Committee conducted a survey in late May and early June, 2007 to get feedback from parents about the extent to which the program is achieving its stated goals, as outlined in the Options handbook. The results provide useful information about the perceived success of the Options program, including areas for further study and improvement. The findings will be shared and discussed with the Options Community Council, Lincoln staff and parents.

The survey asked parents to respond to statements that reflect four key principles and thematic areas of the Options Program. To keep the survey brief and focused, not all of the thematic areas described in the Options Handbook were included. The four themes chosen for this survey included:

- Community
- Child Development Theory
- Academic Growth
- Social and Emotional Development

Methods

Question formats included agree-disagree and open-ended comments for each of the four sections. Several demographic variables were included to enable more detailed analyses of the data.

All parents were asked to complete the survey. One hundred and twenty completed surveys were returned. This represents approximately 30 percent of the parent population. Some parents chose to submit separate surveys for each child, although these were relatively few in number. Some parents did not provide responses to all survey items.

Limitations: This survey project did not draw a random sample of parents from the larger population. Rather, all parents were invited to participate to maximize the opportunity for all to respond. This approach can sometimes result a larger overall number of respondents, provides a potentially richer set of data, and is simpler to administer. It does, however, increase the likelihood of response bias, since only those parents who chose to complete the survey are included, and their responses may not represent the broader parent population.

Results

The results are presented in several parts:

1. Part One provides bar charts depicting responses on items within each of the four thematic areas. Following each theme is a brief description and analysis of the written comments provided by parents regarding that theme. A discussion of additional comments provided by parents is also provided.
2. Part Two covers responses to questions regarding the level of parent participation at Lincoln over the 2006-07 school year. This section also includes a summary of the range of volunteer activities parents participated in, and some concluding remarks about the survey findings and next steps.
3. Appendices include verbatim transcriptions of all written comments for each of the four thematic areas, and other comments regarding other thoughts or suggestions on ways Options can be improved. Comments have been altered to protect individual identities.

PART ONE

Sense of Community

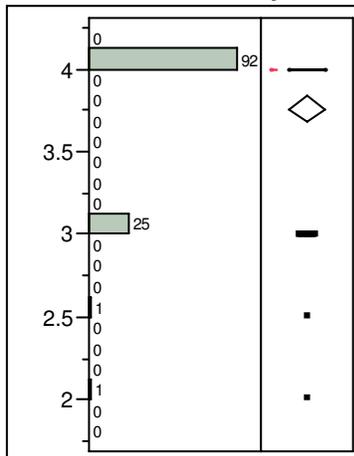
This topic included several items related to the extent to which parents believe their children are experiencing:

- *A sense of community at Lincoln Options*
- *Beneficial learning from other children and adults other than his/her teacher*
- *Mutual trust and caring between the child and: teachers, other children, other adults, and groups.*

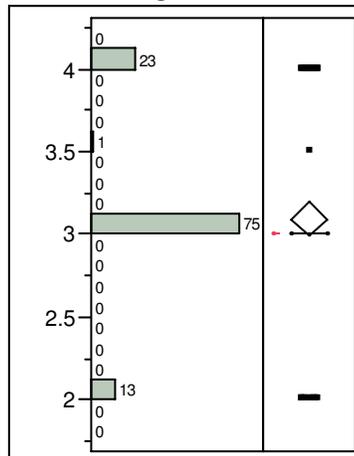
The following charts summarize the distribution of responses and averages (depicted as a <> shape) for each of the six survey items in this category. As seen below, the averages for all items are above the mathematical average of 2.5, and the amount of variation among responses is relatively modest, showing a fairly stable response pattern. The vast majority of respondents either agreed (item value=3) or strongly agreed (item value=4) These results show that overall, respondents agreed that there exists a fairly strong sense of community and a high level of trust among students, teachers and parents at Lincoln Options.

The average value of around 3.75 was highest on items 1 (overall sense of community) and 3a (trust and caring between my child and his/her teacher). The lowest average score of around 3.1 related to parents' perception that their child learns from other children at Lincoln. A small number of parents (13) disagreed that their child is experiencing beneficial learning from other children. Eight parents disagreed that there is mutual trust and caring between their child and other children.

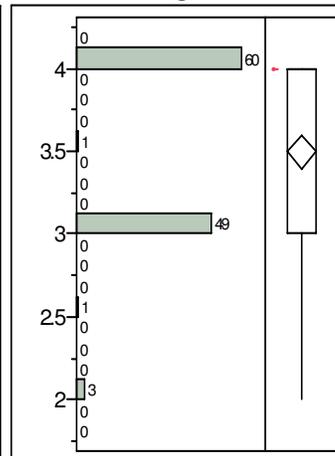
1 Sense of community



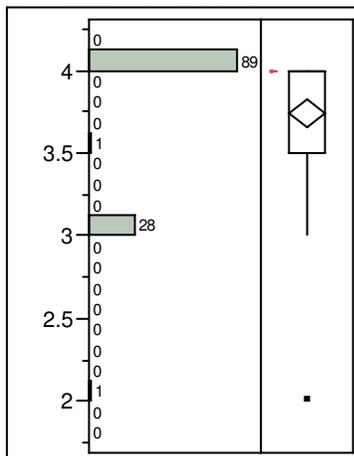
2a Learning from children



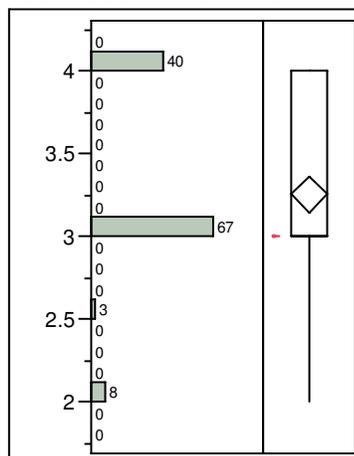
2b Learning from adults



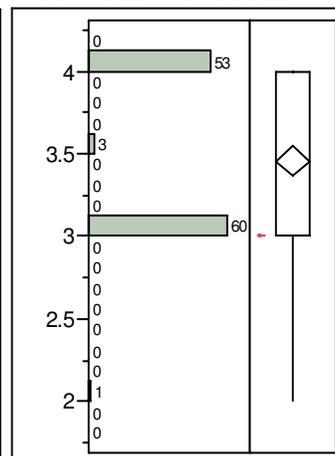
3a Trust with teacher



3b Trust with children



3c Trust with adults



Parent Comments on Sense of Community and Trust

Written comments on this theme expressed many positive perceptions parents hold about Community and Trust at Lincoln Options. Forty parents provide comments, the majority of which were complementary and showed appreciation for the Options community. The following comments were typical:

The very strong sense of community for both students and parents is absolutely one of the best parts of Lincoln. Our child regularly speaks with pride and affection about her school, the staff and parent volunteers.

Assemblies, buddy classes, museum nights, game nights, etc. all greatly enhance the sense of community we all feel at Lincoln.

One of the most amazing communities on the planet! I'll miss it very much!

It is what Lincoln is all about.

There were relatively few concerns raised by parents in this section. Those that were raised generally identified negative student-to-student interactions and behaviors. This may help explain why some parents gave lower numerical scores regarding child-to-child learning or trust. For example:

My child has been something of a target (both real and imagined) of older children this year. It has been a good learning opportunity, but has detracted somewhat from his sense of community.

While the liberal philosophy at Lincoln has many benefits for my child, I think we could do more to address negative social behaviors on a day-to-day basis. It seems like some kids get away with stuff they shouldn't.

My child often tires of the behavior difficulties of the other children. Would like to see stronger effort made to address children's disrespect to each other, mouthiness, etc. (tough job)!

Child Development Theory

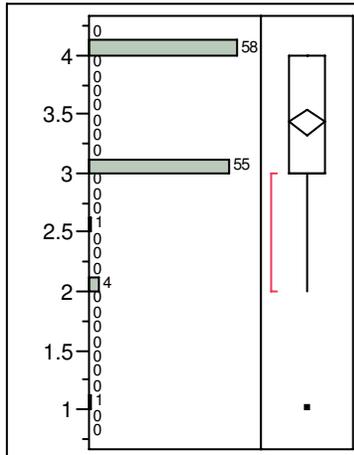
The Child Development topic included three core items. One item asked parents to identify the extent to which they felt Options is supporting their child to *move at his/her own rate* through the various stages of growth (social, emotional, intellectual, physical, etc.).

The second question sought to identify whether parents felt their child is *valued by staff for his/her individual progress*, rather than compared to their peers.

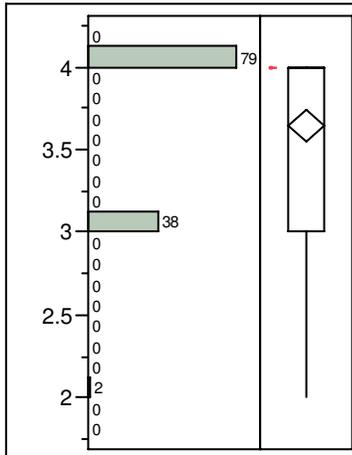
The third question asked parents to say whether they thought their child's conferences and evaluations are based on *individual progress* toward learning goals, rather than grade level expectations.

The following charts show that parents felt that these three developmental features are well in place and being practiced at Options. The high average scores across the three items and very low variability among responses suggest that most parents believe that these core elements of child development theory described as part of the Options philosophy are supported both in theory and in practice.

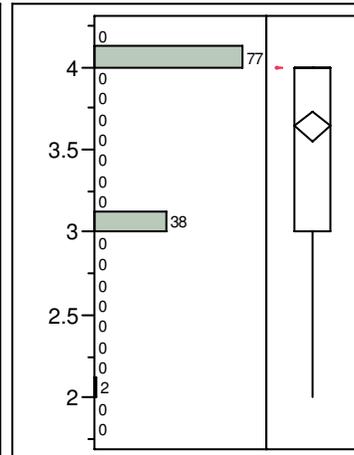
4 Move at own rate



5 Valued for progress



6 Individual progress



Parent Comments on Child Development Theory

Comments from parents on this topic were very mixed and included references to many different aspects of child development theory and practice. Consistent with the scores on individual items, above, there were several positive comments like the following:

I appreciate this most about Lincoln. The staff truly embrace the philosophy that each child's learning is to be celebrated. I have never seen a Lincoln teacher use bribed, coercion or peer pressure/competition to motivate students. This is remarkable, as these techniques are still very prevalent in most schools.

I agree with and appreciate the way Lincoln works with its children

Despite the many supportive comments, many of the remarks provided in this section seem to reflect an underlying concern by parents about the level of academic rigor associated with child development, or uncertainty about their child's developmental progress. These concerns, which were not evident in the numerical scores on these items, are addressed more fully in the next section (Academic Growth). The following comments illustrate this issue:

We totally believe in the Child Development Theory, but feel academics need a stronger focus at Lincoln.

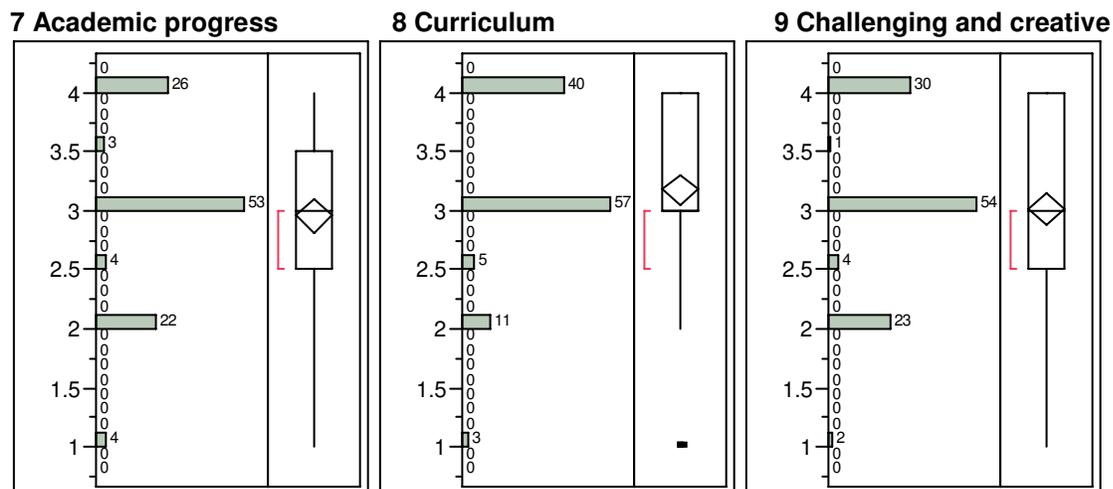
I think it is great that she can go at her own pace, but I am fearful that she may be behind the standard and I worry because, even though, I support the process, I would like to know where she is at.

Academic Growth

There was a considerable amount of variation within the scores for each of the three Academic Growth items. And, compared to the other three themes, average scores were lowest in this section, and there was less agreement between parents on these items.

While the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed with each the item in this section, a number of parents (22) said they disagreed with the statements concerning academic growth, which included whether parents believed their child is *progressing successfully at the academic level for which he/she is capable*.

A smaller number of parents (11) disagreed with the statement that teachers are providing a *curriculum that supports learning at a rate at which parents believe his/her child is capable*. Similarly, some parents disagreed that their child was being provided a *challenging and creative academic experience that met their child's individual learning needs*.



Parent Comments on Academic Growth

Although there were some favorable comments from parents regarding academic growth, the large majority of parents who provided input on this theme expressed concerns about academic rigor and academic expectations of students. This theme also generated the largest number of comments overall: 63 parents provided written input.

On the positive side, there were several supporting comments such as the following:

Yes. STUDENT has learned a lot and really learned and enjoyed a lot. I see he has an increased knowledge of science and math and has been encouraged in his love of art.

I think that the balance between a developmentally based curriculum and a cohesive classroom experience is achieved to an impressive degree.

But many parents commented that students are not challenged enough, and that expectations of students are too low. Many of these same concerns surfaced in the comments provided in several other thematic areas. The following remarks were fairly typical:

My experience is that the younger grades meet academic needs very well, but upper grades fail to be sufficiently challenging for many children.

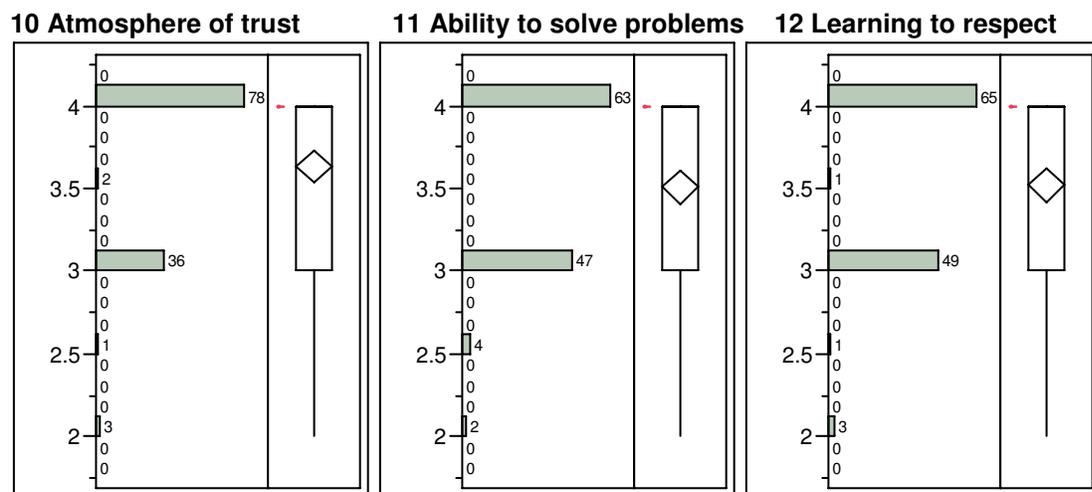
Academic growth is a HUGE concern. My child is not being challenged. Endless art projects have a place for younger learning and magnet schools in upper grades -- Where is the basic Math, Writing and Reading?

I love what Lincoln offers curriculum-wise. I don't think there are high enough expectations academically, sometimes. I actually mean that more for what I observe in general, not just my kid.

Social and Emotional Development

Scores on the three items included in this theme were fairly consistent and very positive. Nearly all respondents agreed (and the majority strongly agreed) that their children are:

- *Learning in an atmosphere of trust and compassion*
- *Developing the ability to solve problems by verbalizing and reasoning*
- *Learning to respect other's feelings, property and uniqueness.*



Parent Comments on Social and Emotional Development

Parent comments on this theme expressed myriad viewpoints. Many complements were given to teachers and Options for supporting a culture of caring and respect for others. A few examples:

Lincoln has an unbelievable awareness of feelings and respect for others and I strongly feel blessed STUDENT can verbalize her feelings and beliefs strongly and confidently to others. Thank you! :)

Time at school is devoted to problem solving, expressing gratitude and caring for others. My child knows and cares about her classmates and they care for her. I'd say her comfort level at school has increased tremendously over the past 2 years.

Trust, compassion and respect have been presented wonderfully.

Several parents, however, expressed their concerns about disruptive or disrespectful behaviors exhibited by some students both inside and outside of the classroom. Underlying these comments appears to be a concern that Options policies and practices are too tolerant, or that new ways of dealing with individual student behaviors are needed:

I have seen children who have had disruptive and aggressive behavior - such as bullying - not be given the consequences of their actions. My son has had repeated difficulties with another boy in his class and has been physically bullied by the other child. His teacher has been good in helping, but I think Lincoln has a policy of not being strict enough or tolerant regarding unacceptable and unsafe behavior.

Sometimes disruptive behavior from other kids undermines the trust and compassion modeled by the adults.

There are a lot of kids who aren't raised with boundaries, who are disrespectful and have disruptive behavior which I don't know how to handle when I'm in the classroom. It is difficult to raise a child to be respectful and kind when there are so many kids who are not like that.

Additional Comments

Near the end of the survey, parents were invited to provide additional comments or thoughts on ways to improve Options. A wide variety of thoughtful input was provided. A number of comments underscored some of the themes presented earlier, including many complements about Options teachers and staff, the Options philosophy, culture and practices:

We feel very privileged to have had STUDENT and STUDENT's sister enrolled at Lincoln these past seven years. Lincoln's philosophy helps in the development of our children both intellectually and emotionally. You might even throw a little spirituality, too. A beautiful learning environment. Thank you!

We all feel incredibly lucky to be a part of the Lincoln community! Thank you!

Parents were also candid about ways they thought Options could be improved. Often, parents provided input that echoed earlier comments they made about areas of concern, especially about issues related to academic foundations:

I don't know if my child is being academically challenged. I love the community, the emphasis on social development and the creativity but I worry there is not enough focus on learning

(academic learning). I don't have enough of a sense that my child is learning the fundamentals adequately for his age. I would like to see more academic progress. Lincoln is good at creating community, good at creating a fun & interesting learning environment, but not very good at academics - this worries me.

I love the social/emotional/community aspect of Lincoln, but with that said, I feel that academic individual progress standards need to be more vigorously upheld - supported - maintained. I have found that it's difficult to hold our children to a standard level of "academic", albeit individual achievement, when there really is no school wide (even classroom wide) accountability...or perhaps a better work - cohesion. Do they have homework, don't they have homework? Some do, some don't. Some are expected to complete it, some aren't. It's confusing for the parents and for the reluctant student, it's an excuse. That's my only gripe - thanks for listening!

Other comments on ways to improve Options included:

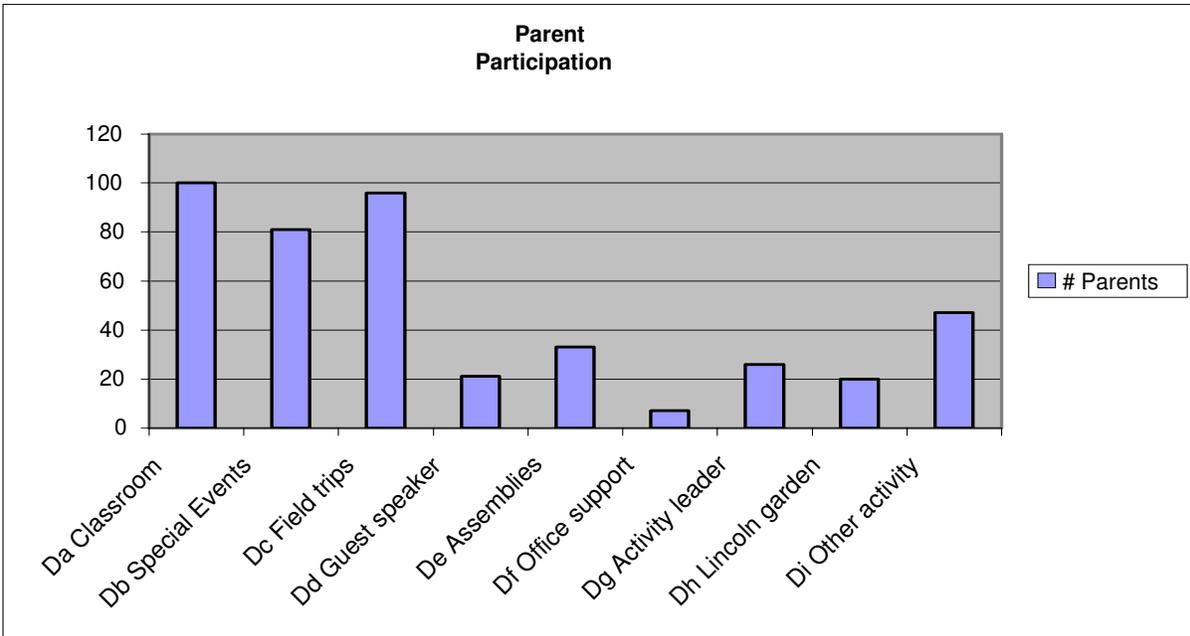
- More parent participation in the classroom (this topic also surfaced in several of the thematic sections).
- Extend Options through the eighth grade, to extend the Options learning environment and to build on and enhance the learning foundation that exists at Lincoln.
- Improve classroom and student behavior management
- More teacher training and staff development on specific topics
- Help students make successful transitions into middle school
- Expand the focus on (and amount of) parent participation
- Improve communications and information sharing between teachers, staff and parents

PART TWO

Parent Participation

The 121 parents who participated in the survey reported that over the past school year they contributed a total of 2,947 school days participating in some way to support Lincoln Options teachers, programs and activities. The average was over 25 days per parent, however some parents reported spending a great deal of time at the school in various capacities over the school year.

As depicted below, parents participated in a broad number of support roles and activities:



“Other” activities that parents noted included the following:

- Writing OPUS articles
- Classroom newsletter articles
- Serving on the Options Community Council (formerly Site Council) and committees
- Arts and crafts projects
- Grant writing
- Library assistance
- Lincoln Auction
- Class book orders
- Camp Thunderbird

Conclusions

The survey results provide useful feedback about parents’ positive support for Lincoln Options. The overall findings show that parents appreciate and support and the underlying philosophy that guides the Options program, and they believe the principles are practices by school teachers and staff. The findings also identify areas in where further attention is needed, including some topics where parents share specific concerns. Most often these concerns were that more emphasis on core academic subjects is needed, and that expectations of students are generally are too low. Concerns about disruptive student behaviors and classroom management were also raised.

Focused discussion between Options leadership, teachers, staff and parents about the survey results would help to further clarify the extent to which the survey findings represent the collective perspectives of parents about the core strengths and of Options, including the

challenges and areas in which further improvements are needed. It may also be useful to hear from current and former students about their experiences so that their viewpoints are also included and considered.

Future survey projects could be conducted that focus on specific issues identified in this report. Administration of this survey (or an enhanced version) should be repeated every two years to provide a measure of changes in parent perceptions over time. Administration of this survey should occur in May (rather than June) to help maximize parent participation and boost response rates.

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Apprndix A

Parent Comments by Theme

Community Comments
There aren't many parent volunteers in my classroom -- one that comes often, but she is not very "caring".
A very strong component of Lincoln education
HUGE amount of bullying on the playground. Disrespectful and foul-mouthed students who blatantly disregard parent playground monitoring. Lincoln condones this behavior - it's atrocious!
I'd love to see a curriculum that addresses child to child communication and conflict resolution. There's a bit difference between teacher/staff & child interaction and child to child interaction - - perhaps this is normal development, but I think it's a great time to TEACH helpful interactions.
I thought that school would be a good place for us to meet friends and other neighborhood children, so I invite kids over, but friendships at home don't seem to carry over to class and recess.
My child has developed many social skills through her interactions with adults and peers. She has learned how to give and receive support from both adults and friends. In many instances, she has learned academic skills from interaction from peers, but peers have also detracted from her learning through disruptive behavior.
3.b. Some of the bigger and wilder children have had behavior that has scared my younger child.

Overall our family is very please with the support, caring and diversity of the Lincoln community.

This component is hinged on the teacher. My child has a truly skilled teacher who is the ideal Lincoln model and crates a successful learning and socially/emotionally environment (WFR)

We need to work on ways for more parent involvement and leadership. How do we draw more families to the beginning of the year picnic, to community events? Museum night was fantastic and of course Camp Thunderbird.

While the liberal philosophy at Lincoln has many benefits for my child, I think we could do more to address negative social behaviors on a day-to-day basis. It seems like some kids get away with stuff they shouldn't.

My child often tires of the behavior difficulties of the other children. Would like to see stronger effort made to address children's disrespect to each other, mouthiness, etc. (tough job)!

The children in his class can be cruel and not very nice at all.

This community is great!

I would like to know more about Lincoln's policy for addressing ongoing violence and rough behavior in particular children.

Love assemblies! Would love more community service options. Would also love to feel a part of the whole Olympia/County/State community. Sometimes Lincoln is too much of a bubble. How can we shre with nearby neighborhoods, schools and the district? I'd love that relationship to feel more integrated.

Lincoln has a wonderful sense of community - we love it!

My child has come home with a lot of difficult new behaviors from her peers.

Assemblies, buddy classes, museum nights, game nights, etc. all greatly enhance the sense of community we all feel at Lincoln.

It is what Lincoln is all about.

My son has many adults he looks to for help, encouragement and guidance, TEACHERS and the other teachers at Lincoln besides his own. I really appreciate that.

My child has been something of a target (both real and imagined) of older children this year. It has been a good learning opportunity, but has detracted somewhat from his sense of community.

Didn't know what was meant by "groups"

Keep on doing what you're doing.

My older child has more difficulty accepting input and guidance without substantial trust - he won't listen and accept just because the speaker is an adult. My younger child feels so comfortable at Lincoln and confident the world loves him, he has no fear of being led astray, even. Different personalities...

My children have adored all their experience with the teachers they have had!

"they should teach kids to be nicer" "especially on the playground"

The Options community has been an integral and beneficial part of our family for a decade. For this I am truly grateful.

One of the most amazing communities on the planet! I'll miss it very much!

One of the great accomplishments of Options.

Not much parent help in class this year.

The very strong sense of community for both students and parents is absolutely one of the best parts of Lincoln. Our child regularly speaks with pride and affection about her school, the staff and parent volunteers.

Being a 1st year student my child has experience some exclusion on the playground in spite of the teacher's efforts. However, over the year, this has changed.

Lincoln is a wonderful community.

The assemblies, music, Harvest Fest, cooking in the kitchen are all great. Also the buddies have been a good idea. "Open doors" is a good idea for com. building.

It's good. It's the whole reason she is there.

I love that the kids assume all adults will be interested in them.

School is part of community: community is not a part of school – i.e., children need to have longer term outside interactions w/ other adults/children outside of the school time to support your goal of "community".

Lots of friendship disputes (power and control issues) that occur on the playground during recesses.

My child feels safe to experiment and always willing to try something new.

Some children are more respectful than others...

Child Development Theory Comments

I do hear a lot of "developmental level" talk but MUCH less than in other situations/schools.

Certain teachers pay closer attention to this aspect of my child's development than other teachers.

My child's teacher is completely out of touch on my child's academic progress because she is so totally focused on the wacky students who have commandeered all the power and control in her classroom.

In general I believe the teachers & staff try to teach to my son's level, but I also think that they tend to underestimate his abilities.

Great!

I appreciate this most about Lincoln. The staff truly embrace the philosophy that each child's learning is to be celebrated. I have never seen a Lincoln teacher use bribed, coercion or peer pressure/competition to motivate students. This is remarkable, as these techniques are still very prevalent in most schools.

STUDENT's teachers have been outstanding at providing advanced learning opportunities for her given class size (meaning I don't expect more within the constraints of class size).

Again, agree because of the teacher -- has not been my experience with my other child.

Accountability increases desire to work. Who is going to write 2 pages in a journal if no one is coming back to see you did it - not me!

We totally believe in the CDT but feel academics need a stronger focus at Lincoln.

Sometimes I feel like STUDENT could have been pushed more to strive at making her goals happen at a quicker pace so she was more confident about moving into middle school.

Would like more feedback from teacher(s).

In our daughter's case she needs encouragement to expand her social relations.

Having progress marked on scales (as in TEACHER's conference worksheets) makes it easier to track the progress in individual areas.

Goal setting & achievement has been difficult (for us) - too easy or not interesting or vague goals. Would prefer specific individualized enrichment planning that assist child in areas of challenge and gifting. We could use better assistance in setting goals that speak to and create a passion in the child, teacher, and family.

We with our child was being asked/encouraged to progress intellectually at a faster pace that seems to parallel to intellectual capabilities.

The lack of structure and testing has been problematic in determining real levels of development.

I would like to see a bit more emphasis on pushing kids in English, math & spelling.

I agree with and appreciate the way Lincoln works with its children.

I think it is great that she can go at her own pace, but I am fearful that she may be behind the standard and I worry because, even though, I support the process, I would like to know where she is at.

Good.

Too much focus on friendships! Sometimes kids know how to work things out. At times more focus on emotions turns out more emotions. Listen more to them and let them be! Also, more discipline at times!

Although I highly value non-traditional (i.e. non-academic) support and emphasis, I sometimes feel it comes at the price of intellectual stimulus and the emphasis to put forth academic effort.

I appreciate that the children @ Lincoln are supported to progress at their own rate and that all intelligences are valued.

Children do move at their own pace. However it seems difficult for those gifted in one or another area to get "pushed" to develop these gifts.

I see my child setting his own learning goals, which is great, but I would also like to know if he is learning appropriately for his age. I don't like a lot of standardized testing but I would like some reassurance that he is mastering the skills he needs or where we should focus extra effort at home. Evaluations should be broader than discussing the child's individual learning goals (set by himself). They should include some indicator that he is learning at levels appropriate for his age. They should be more specific and informative. I don't find the evaluations very helpful.

My child could be challenged more academically. At a family reunion, I heard her tell cousins she liked Lincoln because it is an easy school.

I feel my child's teacher could aspire to higher academic goals.

Need is high for social skills practice and development.

This philosophy has worked well for both of our children – STUDENT1 - currently a 5th grader and STUDENT2 - now a 9th grader.

This has worked well in many ways. He's a relatively mature kid in many ways, so it has been difficult to challenge him some times.

STUDENT has always been shown respect for who he is.

Perhaps reviewing that the child is hitting some baseline academic markers 1-2 times a year, whether in the conference venue or not, should be considered.

STUDENT has benefited from being able to learn at his own pace, in ways that help him maximize learning in the school setting.

I have been disappointed by several teachers who do not encourage & facilitate my child to work at the appropriate level and provide sufficient challenge & course material, esp. in math and social science (also geography). Whole class assignments do not usually address the needs or level of my child. No ind. was done in math. No challenge.

All, except academics is generally weak.

Excellent focus on this portion of Options.

Fortunately our child is academically capable and has had no learning difficulties.

Wish academic expectations were higher for my child and not so variable.

While the social development at Lincoln is excellent, academic expectations sometimes seem unnecessarily low.

Academic Growth Comments

Not enough academics AT All -- especially 4-5. Some students have too much power and control which results in massive loss of academic learning time.

Lincoln is so weak academically that I have to pay for summer school and tutoring because my daughter is "behind" thanks to her incompetent teacher.

My children (2 olders who grad'd Lincoln) have tended to be fairly motivated. As a regular parent helper I do have concerns with this philosophy for kids who drift into being a little checked out, esp. when teacher isn't Totally On and energized to keep everyone going - or parent help isn't there to support.

I feel my son would thrive with a bit more challenging curriculum.

My son has many challenges. While many of his need are met, not all of them are.

I think that the lack of parent help in the classroom is a detriment to the teacher's ability to provide enough academic growth. I wish classroom parent help was required.

My experience is that the younger grades meet academic needs very well, but upper grades fail to be sufficiently challenging for many children.

I think that the academics are not progressive - not challenging - just letting kids maintain a level of maintenance - not progress.

My 2 children have verbalized some degree of boredom academically -- I feel they are capable of more advanced or a faster progressing curriculum.

I'm not sure I'm completely thrilled with Trailblazer worksheets, she does them ok but I don't know if the concepts stick.

My daughter is young for her grade and first grade was a real challenge. It was difficult for her developmental needs to be met in a 1-2 class environment. Now at 3rd grade in a 2-3, she is right at home.

Academic growth is a HUGE concern. My child is not being challenged. Endless art projects have a place for younger learning and magnet schools in upper grades -- Where is the basic Math, Writing and Reading?

Yes. The TEACHER is KEY!

I think it would be helpful if she were pushed more (academically).

Need more emphasis on reading independently!

Need more reading!

Academics are the weak link at Lincoln, although I'm not overly concerned about it. I wish there was a greater focus on homework because I want to be involved in this aspect, and I don't always have time to do it in class. Also I know the kids have a big homework load coming in 6th grade and I want them to be prepared. TEACHER-keep up with the weekly homework. Maybe I can help with that.

Our child seems like she would benefit from more structure/expectations with regard to the subjects she does not enjoy as much.

The academics are weak and behind norms.

Again, would like to see a much stronger emphasis on academics to keep our child up to their potential. (Have also spoken to many parents who agree.)

Lincoln has been just fine for my academically motivated child. But my mediocre learner I have worries about. Is he being challenged enough academically.

STUDENT's capabilities are great when pushed hard! She is quite behind in math and I feel she could have used more challenge, so she would have to focus more on where she needed the help. Math...

I know he is learning but many times worksheets are incomplete.

Could be more challenged.

My daughter is a smart, motivated almost 8 year old. I think she should be reading and she is not. She can "read" but is not reading books on her own. I really don't know about math. It is much harder to judge as a parent and I see NOTHING come home. To me she seems "good" at math, puzzles, music, etc. but don't know how she is doing math developmentally.

I love what Lincoln offers curriculum-wise. I don't think there are high enough expectations academically, sometimes. I actually mean that more for what I observe in general, not just my kid.

Needs more direct instruction with reading and math.

One of our children isn't being challenged academically. Instead of meeting her where she is, it seems like the class just settles in at the level of the lowest common denominator.

I have concerns that my child is not challenged academically in the classroom.

I appreciate that project work allows for a variety of ways to engage in learning.

Thank you!

Our child could meet greater academic challenge. Instruction in writing has been inconsistent, as have the expectations between grades one and three.

Having multiple levels of skill and needs creates a challenging environment for individual attention.

I never thought I'd say this, but I wish there was more homework. I feel my son would benefit from school work we could focus on together. He's an older this year and I think he needs more challenges.

Lincoln has kept my child academically engaged through a developmentally difficult time, and we so appreciate the flexibility shown. Like many kids, more one-on-one time would allow an even greater rate of academic progress, but we know there's not enough time/money for this.

My child isn't getting enough academic stimulation in certain areas.

I feel sometimes like she would rise to the occasion if challenged more.

Good! Good! Good!

Some areas way advanced, some barely making it. Not always working to go farther, not always pushing where not up to standard.

Need more math, reading and writing.

Both of my children are highly capable but are not pushed to excel. Too often they become complacent and complete the minimum of what is asked of them.

This is the area I have the greatest concern. I love all the extra activities that are offered @ Lincoln but I often wonder if time spent on learning fundamentals is not compromised.

Please see comments in previous section.

I think that the balance between a developmentally based curriculum and a cohesive classroom experience is achieved to an impressive degree.

We don't get enough info from evaluations to know this.

I often don't see that my child is being challenged academically.

Creative yes. Challenging, I'm not so sure.

I often feel that "moving at their own rate" means moving at the rate the child feels like doing vs. what they are capable of. Some stress isn't bad and stress-free isn't necessarily good. I think the children can and should be held to higher academic criteria. Homework isn't bad if it helps kids keep up with work not finished at school. It may even promote better time management in class.

I believe standards are low.

STUDENT has thrived at Lincoln in so many ways. I do believe he is capable of more challenging academic work - particularly in math - but the question remains for me - how important is rigorous academic learning in grade school? He has never (or rarely) been bored, but I think he would have enjoyed some more rigor in 4th & 5th grade. This is more an observation than a criticism.

Writing - great; reading - great; math has been difficult the last 2 years (grades 4-5). Math in grade 2-3 was better - more self paced and independent learning was organized and available. This was less so in 4-5th grades.

Could STUDENT have been challenged a bit more? Maybe, but I'm not worried about this. Curiosity, enjoyment, love of learning are the heart of it.

Freedom within a routine/structure in TEACHER's class has been great for my daughter's learning.

More academic expectations may be worthwhile.

Yes. STUDENT has learned a lot and really learned and enjoyed a lot. I see he has an increased knowledge of science and math and has been encouraged in his love of art.

My child is way under challenged academically. The science curriculum should be 1 x/week or at least new material/lab/learning every other week rather than free time once/mo.

(Not good) My child is not being allowed to move at her own pace. (Very good, all teachers should do this!) Math booklets like TEACHER uses were very helpful. Also parent reading 1:1 with kids showed lots of growth.

Not clear if this is happening - and we are involved with the program.

My child's writing skills did not develop as much as I would have liked this year.

We've seen immense growth in TEACHER's teaching this year. She's very aware of all facets of curriculum development and has offered a deep and rich education.

With all parent support, with more kids could pass WASL. If I like it or not, it will continue to be our kids future...

While my child has learned a lot, I think she could learn more.

My child is on an IEP. I always wonder if he is being challenged enough. It's hard to tell.



Social and Emotional Development Comments

I have seen both sides of the spectrum but he speaks more now and talks about his problems more.

There's not much trust - compassion on the playground when children are out of earshot of adults. It's verbally brutally abusive. We'd be shocked and ashamed to know how these children talk with each other. :(

(Physical and emotional) Bullying, harassment, disrespect are rampant. Get me out of here. It's been disappointing school to say the least.

TEACHER is excellent in this regard.

I feel very fortunate that STUDENT was able to attend Lincoln Options because of its strong accent on building self esteem in children and developing their ability to work with other children and being inclusive of their classmates. Thanks.

I know my child is naturally verbal and analytical - he just needs to know when to open his mouth and when to shut it.

It's been a big difference who the teacher is and how they go about engaging this area.

This has been a hard year of peer unpleasantness. She says she can't do anything without her friend telling her she's wrong. I've witnessed some of it.

Time at school is devoted to problem solving, expressing gratitude and caring for others. My child knows and cares about her classmates and they care for her. I'd say her comfort level at school has increased tremendously over the past 2 years.

10. Sometimes disruptive behavior from other kids undermines the trust and compassion modeled by the adults.

Occasionally a child or children in STUDENT's class get away with behavior that I feel is clearly "over the line". (e.g. kid yelling curses and insults at other kids) When a teacher does not effectively communicate (and act in a way to show) that this is not allowable classroom behavior, children (my child anyway) begins to lose trust that the atmosphere is safe.

Reasoning and experience w/ solving problems verbally comes from modeling in the school arena. When children are not held accountable it becomes difficult to practice conflict resolution. Often times an adult facilitator is necessary which I don't feel happens as often as appropriate.

I have seen children who have had disruptive and aggressive behavior - such as bullying - not be given the consequences of their actions. My son has had repeated difficulties with another boy in his class and has been physically bullied by the other child. His teacher has been good in helping, but I think Lincoln has a policy of not being strict enough or tolerant regarding unacceptable and unsafe behavior.

Great job!

Playground needs more supervision - monitoring.

Lincoln has an unbelievable awareness of feelings and respect for others and I strongly feel blessed STUDENT can verbalize her feelings and beliefs strongly and confidently to others. Thank you! :)

My son has made good progress in this area with great support from staff.

My daughter does have a great sense of respecting individuality which she connects to Lincoln. She can still be as mean as a hornet, though and stomp all over her siblings' feelings. I appreciate any and all continued effort by Lincoln in the kindness department.

Problem-solving skills are tough. Maybe occasional "reminder" circle time discussions. Could help those kids who continually struggle with this.

Empathy and awareness are great life skills that cannot be stressed enough.

Lincoln is amazing in this respect (pun intended). The words he uses from both Lincoln staff and Candyce Bollinger amaze me "I'm feeling violated right now..." "My needs aren't being met right now..."

He has learned so much this year!

Trust, compassion and respect have been presented wonderfully. As said before, STUDENT has seemed to experience shyness in group situation.

Beautiful teachers, atmosphere.

This is the primary reason we sought Lincoln Options for our older child. Verbal, reasoned problem-solving is often a two-steps forward, one step back process. Unfortunately, I often feel he has been identified as a problem child, particularly when he is assumed to have created a problem on the playground by an EA.

There are a lot of kids who aren't raised with boundaries, who are disrespectful and have disruptive behavior which I don't know how to handle when I'm in the classroom. It is difficult to raise a child to be respectful and kind when there are so many kids who are not like that.

Excellent here.

These areas are addressed strongly and well at Lincoln.

There are severe problems of relations between children, I believe! STUDENT says it hurts his feelings and he feels picked on at least 3-4 x/week and STUDENT wanted me to add "another kid called him over and said "I won't hurt you" then "shook and slapped" him when STUDENT approached!

STUDENT's social and emotional growth has been honored and tended to. Thank you.

Lincoln is truly remarkable in this area!

This has become one of STUDENT's great strengths.

STUDENT has been challenged socially, emotionally this year. He as well as we - his family - have struggled through this year a lot, but I feel that he has attained more positive growth, behaviorally.

"Social graces" are not taught or encouraged ie - thinking of others needs first.

The emphasis on non-violent conflict res. is excellent. Workshops by Candyce Bollinger were A+. Young male/female info was great w/ teen role models.

Class size is too big to be manageable. Teachers need workshops on how to use & organize parental help in the classroom. Parents could be used more to help break the class into small groups to make class size smaller.

My child is learning and developing in his classroom but I'm not sure about in the overall Lincoln community.

Some "older" teachers seem above the process of guiding children thru issues - and also involving parents in the process. They seem to want to impress us with "their" process rather than prompting the child to self-correct from mistakes made during the school year.

TEACHER excels in this area and as a result, the classroom atmosphere is calm, students on task and lots of learning is happening.

I think Lincoln's model is effective when students with behavior issues are held accountable. Given too much latitude, they can bring down a class.

Additional Comments

Encourage parents (who are able) to spend more time in classroom. I know a few parents in my class that could volunteer but possibly don't feel welcome. It can be intense with all those kids!!

Keep stressing parent involvement so the teachers can focus on what they are good at. I wished I volunteered more time this year but I will try to next year.

Please value a child's ability to READ and write legably (oh great - I can't even spell it - laugh, please!) more homework for 5th graders or projects that involve writing. My older student skirted through Lincoln without becoming a confident reader - that began in the 3rd grade. DON'T LET KIDS FLY UNDER THE ACADEMIC RADAR!

Tough year for us -- STUDENT is being home schooled since March.

About parent volunteers: Some parents volunteer very little (my husband) and some do a lot more. I trust all parents do as much as they can. I was concerned when I heard in an OCC mtg that parents with 2 or more kids might be expected to do twice the amount of volunteering. If you think about that from different viewpoints I think you will see it is unfair and unreasonable.

I came in as a kindergarten parent last year in TEACHER's class and this year as a first grade parent. I really didn't know how things are done. It was very hard volunteering without having a class parent who'd done the auction before and harvest festival, and field trips, to alleviate the sense of being the first to do something, having to learn the hard way. I got pretty burnt out.

I appreciate the Lincoln staff's genuine interest and willingness to have parents work with children in the classrooms. It has been very rewarding for me and my child really enjoys me being there. The staff are so deserving of parent support and many children seem starved for adult attention. I sincerely believe that adults being a steady presence for the day to day classroom activities is the most important thing we can do for our kids. Another thought is that when parents and staff make decisions about school policy (such as enrollment) to really keep the whole Lincoln community in mind, including families that do not yet have children in school. Site counsel generally is comprised of parents who have had kids in school awhile, and those family's needs may be very different from the needs of new families. I've detected a trend in this direction already, and I think this is great. child about her learning. At Lincoln, there is no homework and all completed work stays in folders at school. Also, I am unsure if my child has mastered basic skills, such as handwriting. Handwriting was not taught in kindergarten, and by first grade, it was assumed the children already had the skills. We have felt the need to work on this at home.

In my experience, Lincoln could do a better job of setting clear expectations for classroom management. Sometimes it feels like developmental curriculum is used as an excuse to not ensure that kids are focused on learning. I firmly believe in a developmental curriculum and I believe that children's "job" is to learn and be focused on their work. Most of the time the balance of discipline seems o.k. Occasionally it feels like, as a community, Lincoln is not setting clear expectations among teachers, parents and students about how a loving, supportive community works. In my experience, TEACHER is the "gold standard" as far as setting clear expectations for classroom behavior and making consequences for inappropriate behavior. She does this in a loving but firm way. I know it takes energy and commitment to do that every day.

Academic standards for teachers. Look at the models that are working and integrate into the classrooms that struggle.

I had some interaction with kids on the playground who didn't seem to have much respect for adults. Probably need to have some time in classes to help kids learn that respect is a part of being strong minded and free spirited.

I think it is important to keep close track of the skills kids will need when they transition to their next schools. We need to exam those differences and create creative learning opportunities. Some classes and some opportunities (growing up Male/Female) address this. What would this piece look like as a school/staff/parent focus?

Homework would be helpful to allow us better awareness of progress and what the class is focusing on. It would also help with learning.

Kick up the academics and we will have a great school - not just a good one. Plus the kids will be ready for when they mainstream. Lincoln children are well known to be behind in academics as they more on - ask any alumni parents!

We feel there are many valuable aspects regarding social issues, community etc. taught at Lincoln. However the broad spectrum has left some of the basics little time. Some of the depth needed for reading, math, spelling and writing have suffered. Self-esteem is also built on confidence. When the basics are lacking – self-esteem suffers.

My heart is filled of love and gratitude everyday for Lincoln. We are a blessed community.

I love the social/emotional/community aspect of Lincoln, but with that said, I feel that academic individual progress standards need to be more vigorously upheld - supported - maintained. I have found that it's difficult to hold our children to a standard level of "academic", albeit individual achievement, when there really is no school wide (even classroom wide) accountability...or perhaps a better work - cohesion. Do they have homework, don't they have homework? Some do, some don't. Some are expected to complete it, some aren't. It's confusing for the parents and for the reluctant student, it's an excuse. That's my only gripe - thanks for listening!

For the transition from Lincoln to a public middle school, I believe it would be an amazing benefit to the children to focus on curriculum more so the fifth grade kids felt more confident in themselves with change. Math especially. Or maybe focus on what subjects each child as an individual could use extra help.

I love Lincoln. My daughter loves Lincoln. She hates weekends, breaks and summer. That could not make me happier. I do worry about academics sometimes. I think she should be doing reading and math every day -- practicing these things. I don't know that she is not doing reading and math every day but I also am not sure that she is. I know one would recommend that I spend more time in the class, but I cannot.

The only big concern I have with possible improvement at Lincoln is addressing teacher burn-out. As parents chat w/ each other it seems to me there are a few classrooms that are out of control. Very reasonable people I've met have observed this and it just seems accepted, which is a shame. Teachers yelling at kids; profanity by kids; a bit of thrown together lessons, too much unstructured time in the classroom -- this is what people talk about. I've yet to experience it myself but I'm hoping there are plans in place to observe, support and work with teachers who are running on empty.

We don't get updates from our site council rep. Teacher communication home has been sketchy, too. I would like to know what skills my child is working on in math so I can help reinforce at home and send home reading books (levels) to practice at home.

I don't see anything that needs improving. I still feel new. This is a great school and my son has made many friends and is able to approach any adult. He feels safe at school. I felt welcomed and appreciated as a volunteer. So, see you next year. :)

As my child approaches fifth grade, I've sensed some discontent among parents regarding the quality of the experience and the atmosphere in the classrooms. I'm hopeful that in focusing on incorporating middle school grades, some of these issues will be addressed and resolved.

A Lincoln Options K-8 program is a great idea that should be tried. Lincoln is a very special place with fantastic teachers, staff and principal!

Newsletters are a lifesaver to keep us on track and each teacher we have had has been so good to communicate well. Would like more ways 2 working adults homes can contribute to the community (evenings, early morning, and weekends). Thank you for the appropriate and sweet way Jasmine's passing was responded to. My kids were impacted for the good through this.

Emotional and social development have come somewhat at the cost of academic development especially in math and spelling.

We have a wonderful first year.

We all feel incredibly lucky to be a part of the Lincoln community! Thank you!

We are so grateful for Lincoln and sad we won't be here next year.

I would love to see some continuity in curriculum for each grade i.e. 4th & 5th graders all studying the same things.

We feel very privileged to have had STUDENT and STUDENT's sister enrolled at Lincoln these past seven years. Lincoln's philosophy helps in the development of our children both intellectually and emotionally. You might even throw a little spirituality, too. A beautiful learning environment. Thank you!

A lot of energy is put into friendships/"drama" - sometimes kids are very aware of their feelings but with the philosophy of Lincoln being community, I think individual needs aren't listened to. Academia suffers sometimes because of this. Listen to kids, nip things in the bud early, positive energy transforming raw emotional energy into learning, not making people be friends & going against their intuition and inner being. Sometimes folks don't want to be best buddies!

I wish the admin would respond more supportively to parents who are having problems with teacher who are disorganized or simply not providing academic challenges.

Lincoln Options is a great program, filled with great people. I love having my children here. However I have days when I feel frustrated by the oddly enough, "inner circle" feeling I get that my child is not peaceful, loving or organic enough. He has many areas that need work; however, his strengths are not emphasized at Lincoln, so he mostly gets attention for the mistakes he makes. I'd like to see other areas gain emphasis: athletic strength, academic achievement -- not to deride other children, but to offer the opportunity for success. Not every child is an artist, musician or actor. Let's celebrate them all!

I feel the 4-5th grades are needing more of a academic piece. I feel this year it was a lot of behavior management which leads to a majority of the class not getting their needs met.

I don't know if my child is being academically challenged. I love the community, the emphasis on social development and the creativity but I worry there is not enough focus on learning (academic learning). I don't have enough of a sense that my child is learning the fundamentals adequately for his age. I would like to see more academic progress. Lincoln is good at creating community, good at creating a fun & interesting learning environment, but not very good at academics - this worries me.

I personally believe patriotism is worth instilling at a young age. I think Lincoln does a poor job at this, probably on purpose. As an example, Lincoln does not celebrate holidays, yet I've seen fanfare given to MLK Jr Day or Chinese New Year but not to Thanksgiving, an American holiday. I don't overlook our checkered history with the Native Americans, but we certainly have plenty to be thankful about, like living in this country. More to follow.

I have always loved and respected Lincoln for its ability to carry out its philosophy of community building! In the past year only have I had concerns regarding academics.

It would b so nice to teach children kindness and gentle social skills toward one and other - compassion & respect. This seems to be missing and not just with my child - there are too many incidents - or is that just how it is?

Go ahead with K-8. Develop parent participation.

I was disappointed that although we signed up for a mentor family, we never received help from one.

I'd like to see (feel) siblings welcomed as part of the community. I'd also like to see more community - building events, learning names, etc. Overall, thought we love Lincoln!

Better parent education about the mechanics, history, and expectations involved with the Options program.

We love Lincoln!

Give out this survey form every year. Segregate forms by child's teacher so you can get some real feedback on teachers as well as systems and values.

1. More academic focus. 2. More flexibility/trust to facilitate parental help. 3. All teachers/classes should participate in auction.

Written feedback in addition to conferences. For example, maybe monthly report on what's going well, what needs work.

Would really like to see Options continue thru 6-7-8th grades.

Continuing w/ 6-8th grade Options in an excellent idea whose time has come for implementation. Please proceed with due diligence to see this process completed.

More work sent home for parents to work on with child as optional additional work. More progress reports.

I worry about math and writing skills and wonder if he's getting a strong foundation. We love science and Spanish!

Lincoln Options is a wonderful place for special needs kids to be included in community.