Principals rate Louisiana education chief

61% surveyed say Cody is doing a good or excellent job

Although many Louisiana public school principals say state Superintendent of Education Wilmer Cody hasn't been on the job long enough to post a track record, they are generally satisfied with the job being done by the state's top education official.

Of 389 principals responding to a survey by the Morning Advocate/State-Times, 61 percent said Cody is doing a good or excellent job. Twenty percent said Cody's performance has been "so-so," 3 percent rated Cody's job performance as poor, and 16 percent said they don't know.

"The comments are encouraging," Cody said when asked about his rating from the front lines of education.

"Anymajor education changes have got to have the cooperation and support of a substantial portion of those who are responsible for carrying out the changes," he said. "In that sense, that the survey reveals that things are going in the right direction is very important." Cody got better job rating reviews from principals in rural and inner-city areas than from principals of suburban schools. Seventy percent of the rural principals and 67 percent of the inner-city principals said Cody is doing an excellent or good job, and 54 percent of the suburban principals rated his performance as good or excellent.

Cody's favorable job performance rating was in the low 50 percent range among principals in the Monroe, Baton Rouge and New Orleans areas, and it topped 60 percent among principals in the Lafayette, Shreveport, Lake Charles and Alexandria areas.

"Superintendent Cody is learning Louisiana quickly; I feel he is genuinely interested in improving the educational system, and I think he seeks input from educators before mandating anything," a supporter from Alexandria said. "He seems to be flexible and to have much expertise."

"Superintendent Cody seems to be very professional and knowledgeable as well as having a sense of direction for our system," said a principal from the Leesville area.

However, many others were more critical. Eager comments from several of his colleagues around the state, a New Orleans-area principal who gave Cody a poor performance rating said: "I am writing some innovative ideas and practices. It appears that he is only administering programs that were initialized prior to his tenure as superintendent."

Several principals commented on Cody's "slow"-key style, saying he is not moving fast enough and is not exerting enough leadership. One New Orleans-area principal said Cody "leans to pressure from the governor." A Shreveport-area principal who said Cody is doing so-so added: "He is a puppet which is pulled or played by Gov. Reimer. I personally believe the superintendent of education should be elected by the people."

Another Shreveport-area principal said: "Dr. Cody has some good ideas but he's the drive to push them through. He will sit on the fence to move with politics."

Although principals generally support the job Superintendent Wilmer Cody is doing, many said he hasn't been on the job long enough to be rated fairly. Here's how principals responded when asked what kind of job Cody is doing:

- Excellent job: 10%
- Good job: 51%
- So-so job: 20%
- Poor job: 3%
- Don't know: 16%