D65 Strategic Plan Community feedback

FOCUS GROUPS

SURVEY

SCHOOL VISITS

PREPARED BY

M² COMMUNICATIONS

NOVEMBER 2014

Process

- Developed a strong communications and community engagement plan to support the strategic planning process
- Specific elements of this plan included:
  - Focus groups
    - Designed common protocols of questions for each stakeholder group
    - Scheduled a total of 30 focus groups throughout the community that included all stakeholders
    - Interviewed key stakeholders who could not participate in focus groups (school board members)
  - Survey
    - Designed survey with questions and input from each strategic planning committee
  - School visits - while separate from the work M^2 conducted, notes from the district's in-depth school visits were reviewed and incorporated

High level ideas

- Focus/prioritize
- Actionable plan
- Leadership matters
- High standards and expectations with support
- Focus on the whole child
- Trust and respect
- Transparency
- Strong relationships

Focus groups

COMMON THEMES & IMPLICATIONS FOR THE D65 STRATEGIC PLAN

Background Data

Focus groups were held throughout the community from October 23rd to November 18th

Stakeholders	# of focus groups	# of participants
Parents, families, community members	7	126
Teachers, social workers, psychologists, other therapists, principals, assistant principals	5	59
School and district office staff*	3	16
Students	15	180
Totals	**30**	**381**

*Additional written comments submitted
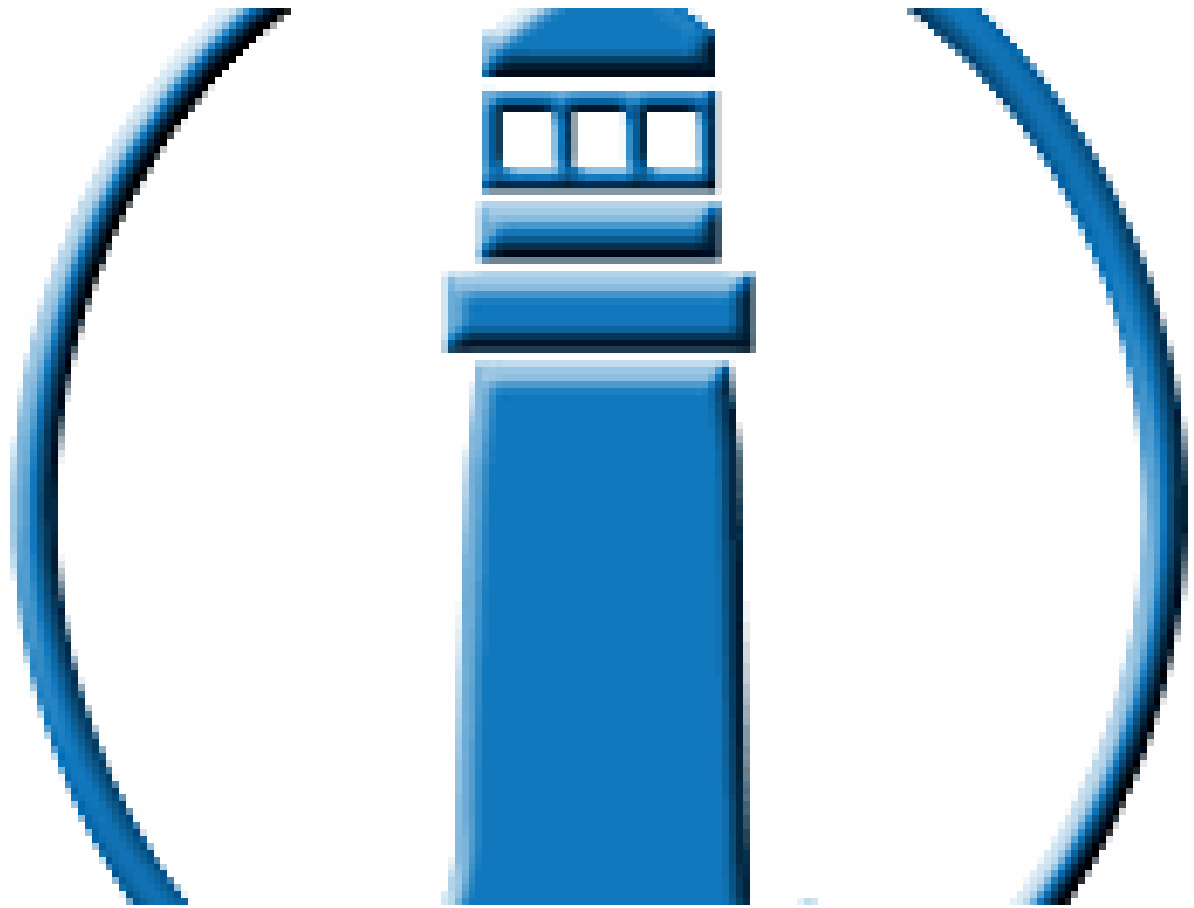
District leadership

- **Set a welcoming tone and culture throughout the district**
  - Support and respect individual schools but develop a sense of unity and equity
  - Establish and support strong internal and external communications
  - Acknowledge and celebrate teachers and staff
  - Create a culture of learning where all adults and students are learners

- **Support academic and social emotional efforts through research based initiatives**
  - Provide early intervention in D65 and in partnership with community

- **Ensure resources and supports across schools**
  - Provide high quality professional development
  - Provide a continuum of resources and supports for schools to serve all students from those who struggle to those who need additional challenge

Excitement that there is a "new day" presented by the new administration

Principal leadership

- **Set a welcoming tone and culture throughout the school**
  - Welcome parents and families and encourage engagement
  - Include and respect people from different roles and backgrounds

- **Serve as instructional leaders**
  - Know the students, believe in them and recognize their strengths
  - Know and support teachers in differentiated ways (e.g. prepared to use teacher evaluation as a teacher growth opportunity)
  - Create a learning environment for all students and educators (e.g. environment where taking risks and trying new things is encouraged)
  - Create and support climate and structure for collaborative teaching

Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning and support is as important as academic learning and support

Schools that effectively integrate SEL:

- Develop and maintain positive, personal relationships between and among all educators, students and families
- Coordinate and integrate SEL into the curriculum across all grades, all subjects, all day (e.g. including lunch and recess)
- Prioritize and provide professional development for all faculty and staff

Comments around PBIS strengths and concerns:

- Some see value in PBIS – common language and framework, clearer expectations - has led to more respectful environment
- Others see as an extrinsic vs. intrinsic reward system
- Some students raise concerns of fairness

Teachers are key

Effective teacher workforce:

- **Needs support in order to achieve "every child, every day, whatever it takes" (e.g. professional development, planning time)**

- **Sets high expectations and believes that all students can achieve**

- **Builds strong, positive, personal relationships with each student**

- **Reflects the diversity of the students they serve**

- Includes all types of education professionals in the school community (e.g. arts teachers, social workers, psychologists, etc.)

- Welcomes evaluation when it supports their professional growth and helps them help their students

Professional Development

- **Consider a wide range of high-quality professional development opportunities**
  - Models and techniques
  - Content areas
- **Ensure professional development opportunities for all D65 staff at all points in their career**
- **All teachers need the training special education teachers get – special education faculty are adept at differentiation**
- **Leverage what works/best practices in D65 – our people can model/teach others**

Time

- **Teachers and principals need time to reflect and to collaborate with colleagues**

- **Teachers need more planning time**

- **Students need more time to move within the school day – within classroom/learning time, at recess**

Building Community

- **A sense of welcoming and belonging for all**
  - Establish a safe environment
  - Help students embrace diversity and welcome all cultures, special needs etc. into the school community
  - District, schools, teachers greet everyone with a smile

- **Strong, positive relationships are key – between and among students, educators, families**

- **District and schools need to employ a range of strategies to engage students, families and community members who have historically not felt included**

Family and community engagement and support

- Engagement
  - **Extra outreach to families who haven't been included (lack of engagement does not mean lack of interest)**
  - **Offer multiple opportunities for families to engage/volunteer in addition to the PTA**
  - Engage community members without students in the schools

- Support
  - **Make schools a hub of the community – provide wrap around services**
  - Support parents so they can support their child's education

Equity

- **Look at all policies, practices and structures – take a systemic approach**
  - Equitable does not mean equal – some schools/students may require different things
  - Disparities in discipline policy implementation
  - Perpetuating inequity by requiring supplies to support curriculum that some families can't afford – e.g. middle school calculators

- **Opportunity gap**
  - After school/PTA programs – not everyone knows about scholarships or not comfortable applying
  - Different schools have different levels of access to supplemental resources (e.g., fundraising)
  - Close the tech gap among schools and students – perceived inequity of technology distribution; inequitable access to technology outside of school
  - Think about the seemingly small inequities that are big things to kids
  - Ensure language supports are available for all students

- Different kids get different response

Teaching and Learning

- **Differentiated instruction – teachers are well supported and prepared to meet each student's instructional needs at all performance levels**
  - Recognize and build on students' individual strengths rather than focusing on deficits and assumptions

- Cutting edge curriculum and instruction that is:
  - Culturally relevant
  - Developmentally appropriate – includes play, movement, hands on activities and relevant and reasonable homework
  - Inclusive of enhanced STEM education, world languages and integrated arts

Special education

- Well respected staff; current leadership commended
- Improving the inclusion model
  - Continuum of options to meet the continuum of needs – e.g. inclusion, Park School and other options
  - Training for regular education teachers and teachers' aides
  - More support to recruit and retain teaching assistants
  - Staff reductions weaken successful implementation; staff spread too thin
- High demand and limited resources make it difficult to deliver all supports listed in IEPs

Transitions

- **Address student needs at pivotal transitions**
  - Early intervention
  - Elementary to middle schools – relationships still matter
  - Middle school to high school – support transition to more rigorous content and independence
- Help students and families understand the progression from Pre-K through elementary, middle and into high school
- Ensure educators talk to one another across grades and districts to support students and teachers

D65 – D202 Collaboration

- In a good place – joint literacy goal is important

- Need to make the collaboration systemic so, regardless of who the superintendents are, the districts will work together

- Collaborate to build a vision for pre-K-12 student success

Partnerships

- **Work with other agencies in the community to provide family and community support and engagement**
  - Northwestern – link with professors, students, programs, resources
  - Support arts integration through partnerships
- **Support and expand current partnerships**
  - Cradle to Career; Community Schools; YMCA Summer Reading programs
  - Articulate school needs and clarify process for partnering

Communication

- **Talk *and* listen between and among all stakeholders**
- **District administrators, principals and teachers communicate effectively and consistently internally and externally**
- **Transparency – information, programs, processes, decisions, financial issues**
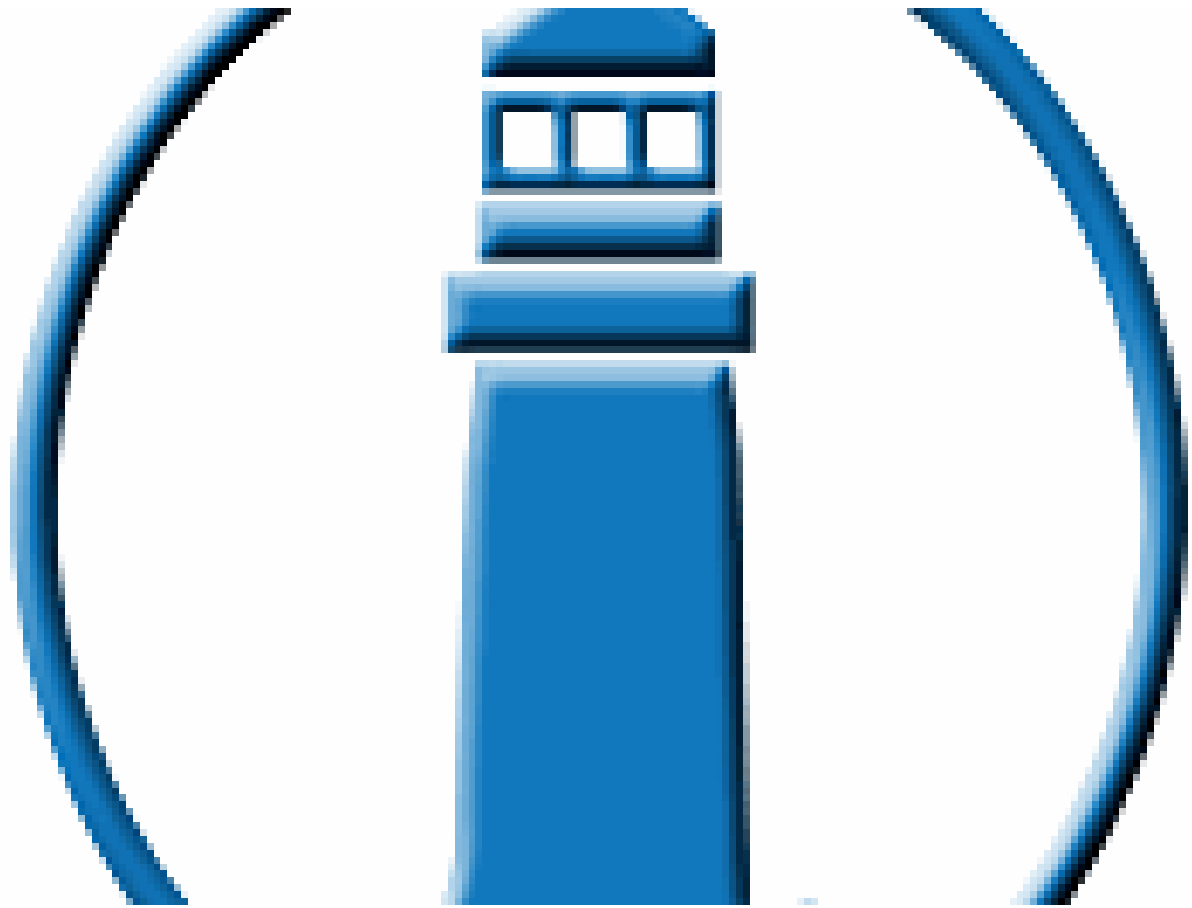- Courage to have conversations about diversity, race, social justice—students and adults

One size doesn't fit all

- **All students need individualization – differentiation**

- **Teachers need professional development to support successful differentiation**

- Need to present diverse opportunities to learn to reach different learning styles

D65

Focus Groups

Lessons learned from our most valuable stakeholders

Students want strong, positive relationships with their teachers and other students

- **Students want themselves and their classmates to be known, supported and encouraged**
  - Understand different students need different things at different times
  - Look for diversity of learning opportunities – hands on, work in groups, move around
  - Want boundaries and to be held accountable
  - Eager to work hard and to help each other
  - Feel best when the classroom is a positive, supportive community
  - Want to know their teachers care about them and their learning but want to be pushed
  - Understand teaching is a very hard job and want more support for teachers
  - Develop a better prepared pool of substitute teachers

School Visits

COMMON THEMES & IMPLICATIONS FOR THE D65 STRATEGIC PLAN

Background

- D65 Superintendent Dr. Paul Goren and Chief Strategy Officer Dr. Maria Allison are in the process of doing extended visits to every D65 school

- To date, they have visited 10 of 17 schools – met with each principals and 10-15 teachers per school

School visits confirm focus group findings

- Devoted, dedicated educators in D65
- Raised the same themes as focus groups
  - Importance of leadership at all levels
  - Building a welcoming community where trust, transparency and strong relationships are norms
  - A learning environment where taking risks is encouraged and ample support is provided (e.g. professional development for adults, individualized instruction and supports for students)
  - Professional development that is driven by student and teacher needs and allows for sharing of best practices from within D65
  - Support for transitions throughout the educational process (e.g. teachers talking and collaborating between and among grade levels – including ETHS)
  - Need for time – to support students, to plan, to collaborate
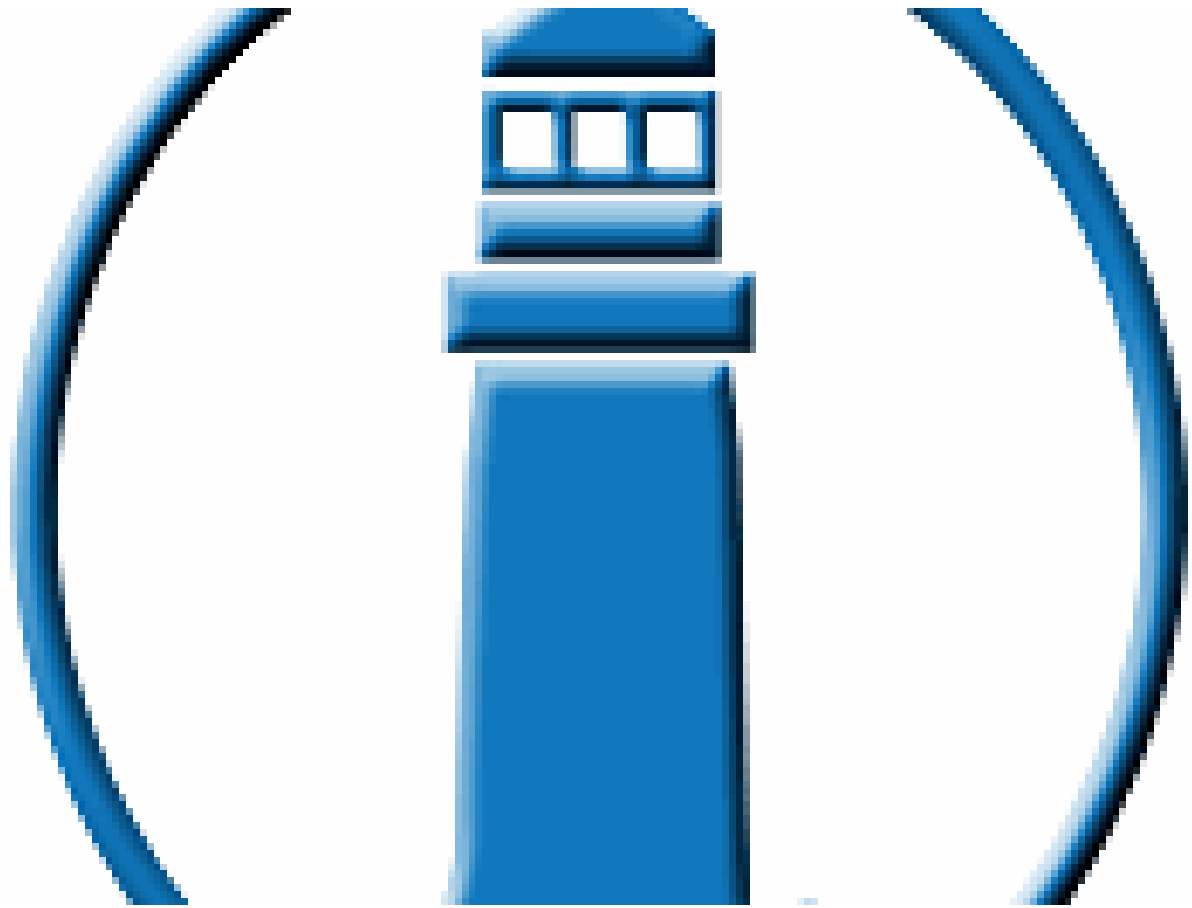
Survey

COMMON THEMES & DETAILED RESPONSES

Background Data

- Survey open to all stakeholders from November 11th –November 26th

- 1,297 total respondents

- Majority of respondents identified as parent/guardian

D65 Survey

Common Themes

View of the education D65 provides students

- 77% of survey respondents rate the education D65 student receive as excellent or above average
  - 23.98% excellent
  - 52.66% above average
  - 20% satisfactory
  - 3.05% below average
  - 0.31% unsatisfactory

- 67% agree or strongly agree that D65 challenges students academically
  - 12.5% strongly agree
  - 54.74 agree
  - 22.59% neutral
  - 6.44% disagree
  - 2.17% strongly disagree
  - 1.55% NA

Elements of a strong learning environment for students

Survey respondents top three elements of a strong learning environment:

- Instruction tailored to individual needs and different learning styles
- Strong leadership that supports teachers
- Interactive, hands on learning

Strong support for teachers

- When given a list that included instructional technology, consolidating professional development half days, Head Start, extended day/year, support for English language learners,
  - 45% of survey respondents think a primary focus of D65 should be celebrating and rewarding outstanding teachers (ranked #1 on this question)

- How can District 65 best support teachers?
  - 47% support high quality professional development linked to teachers interest and needs

High expectations for all students

- When asked if D65 schools and teachers hold high expectations for all students, survey respondents replied...
  - 68% yes
  - 32% no

Family and community engagement

- 56% of survey respondents said it is important to have effective communications between school leadership and teachers *and* parents and community
- 54% said it is important to offer many different ways for families/community to engage with schools
- 40% would like to see schools as a hub for a range of community resources including academic, social/emotional and family support

Safe and supportive schools

- 41% of survey respondents said it is important to help student navigate conflict and problem solve
- 37% said D65 needs more teachers and aides in the classroom to support classroom management
- 35% said clear expectations and policies for behavior and conduct are important

Willingness to pay higher taxes for schools

- 63% of survey respondents said they would be willing to pay higher taxes for capital projects (e.g. building repairs and improvements)