

Results from the OCSD Focus Group Session
October 29, 2022
Dr. Suzanne Gilmour & Dr. Maureen Patterson, Facilitators

These responses represent those made on a Parking Lot (1) during initial presentation of the report and our process for today, (2) during the group discussions, (3) during the mixed group discussions, (4) sharing following the gallery walk, (5) on response cards where we asked focus group participants to suggest next steps, & (6) feedback regarding the process. Several comments fell into multiple categories which were synthesized in the primary category for this summary. Responses were captured as they were written or spoken by participants.

Suggestions For Consideration

Class Size

- 1 Provide data that suggests that larger class size doesn't negatively impact the students
- 2 Biggest issue here is by doing this-class sizes will be at its highest and will compromise our district's ability to grow and improve.
3. Close a school if you must but class sizes cannot go up. Considering re-configuring grades
- 4 If we do this will the district reduce class sizes and provide for teachers?
In Kingsford we have classrooms with 21-24 students with 8-10 IEPs. How are we going to enhance their education with larger class sizes?
- 5 Is this the time to be considering class size?
- 6 Again my concern is the EQUITY. Class sizes will be over 25 - my class would be 34 kids if you added 14.

Data

- 1 Data be corrected and clarified as needed. Long range of bus ride times vs. average corrected
- 2 Classroom sizes in all scenarios.
- 3 Obtain updated data on 22-23 class sizes, building usage/layout
- 4 Alarmed by poor quality of data- many omissions- use of pandemic year info- lack of data on staffing ratios as well as class size
- 5 Making a big decision on basis of these data and untenable interpreting presented by analysts is a terrible idea.
- 6 Closing a school has a large negative consequence- benefits are unclear and not likely to hold up long term
- 7 Answers to questions - updated data
- 8 Further research on questions given
- 9 More detailed exploration for outcome
- 10 Gather information that was requested in the focus groups
- 11 Provide updated data
- 12 Collect the current and correct data

- 13 If the superintendent/BOE are leaning toward closing already, we ask that you review the updated data and answer all questions before completely revisiting the topic
- 14 Update all requested information and share with everyone
- 16 Need more time and information before a decision is made.
- 17 BOE should update data and should proactively survey the community about these potential changes.
- 18 Data is more important - give us up to date information
- 19 Updated SPED students not included in total enrollment numbers
- 20 2020-2021 pandemic influence on retirements/resignations?
- 21 Context why? Data misinterpretation
- 22 2022-2023 Date is more important to give us up to date information
- 23 Need updated info of next years if we close FLS and current class size data

Enrollment

- 1 There's a bigger issue-addressing enrollment that not being considered
- 2 Why is KPS the only school with increase in enrollment?
- 3 If enrollment is down, why did we add so many administrators?
- 4 Updated SPED students not included in total enrollment numbers

Finance

- 1 Collaborative and individual taxpayer savings based on a median home assessment per year. Including anticipated repairs and improvements. Voters would have a better idea of what the benefits could be vs. the cons.
- 2 Leighton specific capital investment studies over a 10-20 year span
- 3 If savings is the main goal, take a good look at all areas that provide savings opportunities. Fund balance for special education
- 4 Aside from an "easy closing" of a school, what else is being considered to be more financially responsible
- 5 The modifications to move 6th graders to the MS would provide a big return on investment (ROI) - Why is moving 6th grade to OMS not talked about in terms of long range planning?
- 6 Enrollment is down, budget is up??
- 7 What was the goal? Was it to save \$ or to address students' needs? No clearly stated goal.
- 8 How will a change in budget affect test scores/graduation rate?
- 9 Tax levy does not address changes to projected lower state aid and future PILOT payments and should be considered.
- 10 Full value tax rate and tax levy decrease without analyzing FULL budget gives a disingenuous picture of "strong Fiscal" outlook.
- 11 Find other ways that will save district money that does not DIRECTLY IMPACT OUR STUDENTS
- 12 Look into administrative overhead. Are we using a higher number than required.

Focus Group & Community Involvement

- 1 Board meets with focus group to discuss work done today
- 2 Meet with board members and administrators to open dialogue about concerns and data
- 3 Include community administrators (mayor, council etc) in upcoming meeting to incorporate their input
- 4 In public session, of course, the BOE should respond to all of the points and questions brought up today. Once this happens, this group should be given written copies of the BOE discussion and specific answers. Then this group should be brought back together to discuss next steps.
- 5 Provide feedback to BOE and admin
- 6 Collect additional data and provide answers to questions from focus group
- 7 Engage additional community members in future focus groups
- 8 Allow the focus group to be part of ongoing discussions
- 9 The focus group needs to meet more than once to slow down and make the best decision with transparency. We should also be involved in decision making.
- 10 The focus group should be reconvened to receive more data/answers. This will help to acknowledge that the group's work was heard.
- 11 Follow up with BOE
- 12 Continue to listen to the community so decisions aren't made in a vacuum
- 13 BOE and administrators should thoroughly review the focus group feedback.
- 14 BOE should have a public meeting to reflect how final decision is going to be made with a Q & A session
- 15 Answer the questions that the group came up with and provide answers
- 16 Community engagement/focus group meet again and our questions should be answered that we asked today.
- 17 Be more transparent/communicate with stakeholders - letters, email, surveys- it's not effective and needs to be improved
- 18 Give input to BOE and meet with BOE. Be as transparent as possible
- 19 Will this focus group meet again after the BOE considers our suggestions?
- 20 We should continue to have a voice as a community and the BOE needs to listen and be open to listen now and in the future.
- 21 Keep this focus group together and bring us back together for another meeting (s)
- 22 Have a follow up to today's meeting with updated data
- 23 More community involvement
- 24 More transparency from OCSD superintendent/School Board with community
- 25 I appreciate the district involving us in the focus group as long as you listen to us
- 26 All for the district to vote on findings after this is addressed.
- 27 Increase transparency of how we got to this point
- 28 Suggesting that this should be set aside for now.
- 29 Thank you for today

Home Schooling

- 1 Investigate why is (Home School) HSch enrollment increasing? What is the plan to get students back to our schools?
- 2 Are we considering Home schooling increase is temporary due to COVID?
- 3 Total number of special needs students and home schooled children with special needs?

Redistricting & History of Redistricting

- 1 (We) should be looking at the entire district, not just Leighton. We've redistricted in the past and busing kids currently further than 5 miles between Leighton and Minetto needs to consider for long-term all of current placements - school should be consider/affected by the redistricting
- 2 Previous redistricting- Ed Center closed- took over FLS wing
- 3 Consider completely redistricting if the closing is decided on
- 4 If voted no to closing/repurposing FLS when will this become an issue again?
- 5 List of pros/cons of closing Leighton
- 6 Another EQUITY concern is "special permission" of going to school parents "need" for childcare . The kids being redistricted will be moved -it already happens.

Social Emotional Needs

- 1 Address social and emotional needs are being met
- 2 Can we use this time to build a better community? Sense in the 4 buildings
- 3 More social workers. 2 districtwide!!
- 4 Mental Health is a top priority to enhancing and supporting student success

Space Concerns

- 1 Board tours classroom spaces and "Available" spaces in all 5 buildings
- 2 Look at each school during the active school day to see how they can make this work
- 3 What will be done with the Leighton building?
- 4 Present plans for use of FLS facility if it's no longer used as an elementary school.
- 5 Do we have access to the space utilization part of the study? Are there physical maps of each building?

Special Education

- 1 Addressing the parents' concerns about special education and the students' well-being instead of considering a school closure
- 2 Address larger issues within the district - First- lack of teachers and lack of support/IEPs etc.
- 3 How many teachers.aides etc. for special needs kids. All in one building? BOCES programs?
- 4 Leighton next to high school -classes for high school students to get involved with special needs for future occupation

The Study

- 1 The board asked for the study but who proposed to close FLS?
- 2 Who prompted the study? Did the Board ask independently for the study or was it presented by Dr. Calvin as a suggestion?

Vision & Focus Question

- 1 What is the end goal?
- 2 What will the future look like
- 3 What do we want to look like
- 4 What do we need to get there? - only then consider closing a school as part of the plan if necessary
- 5 What is our vision?
- 6 Create and communicate a district vision (pros/cons of closing a school)
- 7 What is the vision for the district?
- 8 We want to make sure this process is EQUITABLE which goes back to the focus question

Verbal Comments:

- 1 Several members of the focus group thanked us for the opportunity to be involved and indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to share their thoughts, questions and suggestions.
- 2 They felt heard
- 3 They were appreciative of being thanked for their participation and for the breakfast and lunch!

Reactions to the Gallery Walk & Final Feedback- Closing Thoughts in Addition to Those Included Above

What's helpful

- 1 Allowing us talk in the beginning initial conversations and then gallery walk
- 2 Making sure we start with the "why"
- 3 Opportunity to look for data pieces that are missing
- 4 For all of the years I have been in the district, I appreciate the BOE/Supt providing this opportunity for my involvement
- 5 Chance to share our thoughts and hope we are listened to

How did this make you feel?

- 1 Roller coaster
- 2 Unsure
- 3 Need to know what the vision is of the community & county
- 4 What is the long term impact if this building is closed
- 5 What's already being addressed by the BOE/Supt
- 6 Commenting on process - always have to be transparent - getting representative start early

- 7 Nice to see so many people in different situations taking time to talk about Leighton
- 8 Appreciate you all taking the time to be here today,
- 9 Different positions diversity of stakeholders - getting so many people to give up a Saturday
- 10 We share a similar thought process

What do you think is most challenging?

- 1 Inconsistency- if we knew this study was going to take place could we have had input ahead of time to suggest what should be collected?
- 2 This group doesn't see closing the school as a possibility

Today you told stories that made a difference

- 1 We all have perceptions and they are important but we need to focus on the facts.
- 2 Recommendations have already been made. How do we help the system make these decisions? If we're only seen as emotional parents?
- 3 Serenity prayer- shared emphasis on "The wisdom to know the difference of what we can change"