

Synthesis of Results from the Stakeholder Conversations & Survey

Background and Approach

In September 2016 the Woodland Park School District (WPSD) leadership team and board of education initiated a strategic planning process. The desired outcome is a robust, dynamic, and measurable strategic plan that articulates a compelling vision, drives the district's operations, bolsters accountability, and increases transparency with stakeholders. The district contracted the WestEd Policy Center to conduct the data collection phase of the strategic planning process.

WestEd Policy Center staff collaborated with district leaders and board members to design a series of structured, interactive stakeholder conversations to gather input regarding student expectations, guiding principles, and priorities for the district. In November 2016, nine conversations were facilitated in four locations with a total of 118 participants. Participants represented various groups, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders, and other community members.

During each conversation small self-managing groups engaged in three activities, summarized their responses, and then reported to the full group. Full group notes were prepared for each of the nine conversations. Notes were then aggregated by the following topics: expectations, guiding principles, strengths, appreciate most, challenges, and improvements. Qualitative data for each topic were analyzed to identify trends and larger themes were extracted from these trends. *Report 1: Stakeholder Conversation Results* includes a list of themes by topic and number of responses associated with each theme.

Findings from the stakeholder conversations were used to develop a 15-question stakeholder survey. The survey launched December 13, 2016 and closed January 17, 2017. A total of 737 stakeholders accessed the survey and completed the demographic questions. More than 600 participants responded to questions five through nine, and about 550 responded to a majority of the questions. Nearly one-half (47%) of respondents were parents. Business (1%) and community members (7%) were the least represented groups. About one-half (49%) of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 59, and 55% have resided in the area for 10 or more years. In regard to school attendance, 38% of respondents' children attended one of the three elementary schools, 28% attended the middle school, and 25% attended the high school.

Two reports (i.e., aggregate results, disaggregated data) summarizing survey results were prepared and provided to the district in February 2017. This document compares findings across both data collection efforts and presents common themes as well as survey highlights and insights. Information contained in the four reports and synthesis will inform the development of strategic objectives for the district.

Common Themes

Results from the stakeholder conversations and survey are compared in Table 1. The top four items identified through each data collection method are listed for each of the following five topics: expectations, guiding principles, strengths, challenges, and improvements.

Colored shading indicates areas of agreement across the two data collection methods. For example, participants in both methods identified key challenges as staff retention (green), resources (gold), expectations for students, and student behavior (orange). Participants in both methods also favor three improvement strategies:

- (1) Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators;
- (2) Identify, promote, and recognize distinctive, high-quality programs and practices; and
- (3) Offer life skills courses.

Table 1. Comparison of Conversation and Survey Results

STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS		STAKEHOLDER SURVEY	
Expectations of WPSD Graduates			
Develop a skill set that serves them well in the 21 st century	#1	Prepared for life and successful in their future endeavors	
Civic-minded, contributing citizens	#2	Motivated, engaged in, and responsible for their own learning	
Demonstrate good character traits	#3	Employable and demonstrate a strong work ethic	
Prepared for life and successful in their future endeavors	#4	Demonstrate good character traits	
Guiding Principles			
Child-centered decisionmaking	#1	Maintain clear and high academic and behavioral expectations for students.	
Maintain clear and high academic and behavioral expectations for students	#2	Invest in finding, developing and retaining highly-qualified individuals.	
Invest in finding, developing and retaining highly-qualified individuals.	#3	Provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment where everyone is treated with courtesy and respect.	
Relationships that are positive, productive and collaborative.	#4	Be committed to continuous improvement.	
Strengths			
Opportunities	#1	Size of district	
Community and parent involvement	#2	Variety of activities	
Positive learning environment	#3	Learning opportunities	
Size and location	#4	Course offerings (curricula)	

STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS		STAKEHOLDER SURVEY	
Challenges			
Staff quality and retention	#1	Resources (funding and staffing)	
Expectations, student behavior, school climate	#2	Staff retention	
Resources	#3	Student behavior	
Image and leadership	#4	Expectations for students	
Improvement Strategies			
Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators	#1	Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators	
Pursue a comprehensive, long-range strategic and financial planning process	#2	Identify, promote, and recognize distinctive, high-quality programs and practices	
Identify, promote, and recognize distinctive, high-quality programs and practices	#3	Offer life skills courses to help students become self-sufficient	
Provide a basic life skills course that includes financial planning	#4	Communicate clear and consistent expectations for students and staff	

Survey Highlights

Table 1 includes results for survey questions 5 through 9. Survey questions 10, 11, and 12 asked participants to rank options from most to least important. Rankings were analyzed to determine which of 16 programs, initiatives, and opportunities participants consider most and least important. The five most important (i.e., ranked either first or second by participants) and five least important (i.e., ranked last or second to last) items along with percentages of participants selecting these items are listed below.

Most Important Initiatives, Opportunities, and Programs

1. Integrated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs (68%)
2. Compensation for high quality staff (63%)
3. Critical thinking programs (58%)
4. Small class sizes (49%)
4. Advanced Placement and honors program (49%)

Least Important Initiatives, Opportunities, and Programs

1. Enrichment courses for homeschool students (77%)
2. Opportunities to take online courses (65%)
3. Increased instructional time (57%)
4. Learning opportunities incorporating online platforms (53%)
5. Technology (1:1 devices) (52%)

Survey question 13 asked participants to identify programs, initiatives, or services that should be added to address new, emerging, or unmet needs. Suggestions were provided by 160 participants and grouped by theme. The top four suggestions follow:

1. Arts programs
2. Career and technical education programs
3. Advanced courses, gifted and talented programs, and opportunities for high achieving students
4. Life skill classes

The need for advanced courses and life skill classes is consistent with results from previous questions.

Survey question 14 asked participants how they like to engage with and learn more about the district. The top four items include (1) email updates from the school principal, (2) attend events, (3) community calendar, and (4) monthly newsletters.

Survey question 15 asked participants to share any additional comments. Comments were provided by 179 participants. Top themes included staff quality and retention, satisfaction with the district, and high school quality and culture.

Insights from Disaggregated Survey Data

Analysis of disaggregated data revealed areas of agreement and differences among stakeholders. For example, business, community, and parents are most satisfied with the size of the district whereas staff and students are most satisfied with the variety of activities. Additional insights by role group, age group, years of residency, and school are noted below.

Role Group

- Satisfaction — Business, community, and parents are most satisfied with the size of the district. Community, staff, parents, and students are least satisfied with resources (funding and staffing).
- Improvement — Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators was selected as a top improvement strategy by business, community, staff, and parents.
- Programs and Initiatives — Compensation for high quality staff was ranked first by all five role groups.

Age Group

- Satisfaction — Participants under age 12 are most satisfied with learning opportunities and staff quality. Participants ages 12 to 18 are most satisfied with the variety of activities. Individuals over age 19 are most satisfied with the size of the district.
- Improvement — Offer life skills courses to help students become self-sufficient was selected as the top improvement strategy by participants ages 18 and under.
- Programs and Initiatives — Compensation for high quality staff was ranked first by all five age groups.

Years of Residency

- Satisfaction — Results varied by category with new and non-residents most satisfied with learning opportunities, 2-6 year and 10-year plus residents most satisfied with the size of the district, and 6-10 year residents most satisfied with course offerings.
- Improvement — Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators was selected as the top improvement strategy by four of five residency groups.
- Programs and Initiatives — Compensation for high quality staff was ranked first by all five residency groups.

School

- Satisfaction — Strong consensus exists across school groups. Participants are most satisfied with the size of the district and least satisfied with resources (i.e., funding and staffing).
- Improvement — Recruit, develop, empower, and retain highly effective educators was selected as a top improvement strategy by all five school groups.
- Programs and Initiatives — Strong consensus exists across school groups with the following three items receiving top rankings from all five groups: (a) integrated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs; (b) Advanced Placement and honors program; and (c) compensation for high quality staff.

Conclusion

The data collection phase of the strategic planning process included structured, interactive stakeholder conversations with 118 participants and a 15-question stakeholder survey accessed by 737 individuals. While differences were observed between methods and among groups, several areas of strong consensus emerged:

- ❖ Stakeholders expect graduates to demonstrate good character traits, and be prepared for life and successful in future endeavors.
- ❖ Important guiding principles include maintaining clear and high academic and behavioral expectations for students and investing in finding, developing, and retaining highly-qualified individuals.
- ❖ District strengths include size and learning opportunities.
- ❖ Staff retention, resources, and student expectations pose challenges.

Based upon findings from the data collection phase, the Strategic Planning Committee might consider focusing on one or more of following areas:

- (1) Educator recruitment, development, compensation, and retention
- (2) Resource acquisition and distribution aligned with strategic priorities
- (3) Distinctive, high-quality programs including integrated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs; Advanced Placement courses; and honors programs
- (4) Curricula that incorporates life skills and/or one or more life skills courses
- (5) Programmatic investment in fine and performing arts and career and technical education