

**St. Louis Public Schools  
Community Visioning Process  
Teachers' Roundtable  
Meeting Summary – February 27, 2020**



**Note:** This roundtable was conducted as part of a regularly scheduled professional development event. Facilitators were given roughly 35 minutes to ask five questions. We decided to only ask two of the five questions:

- 1. To achieve a system of excellent schools, what must be the District's top priorities? What are the most important changes that District should make to positively transform the system?*
- 2. What critical factors should the District consider when determining whether to close and consolidate schools to resource major system changes? (We did not have time to discuss the validity of the existing factors.)*

This summary only highlights the additional feedback provided by educators. The unique responses for this audience are highlighted in blue on the small group individual summaries. All other responses (in black text) were voiced at the community visioning sessions.

Approximately forty teachers participated in the roundtable discussion; and two small group roundtables were conducted.

St. Louis Public School District  
 Community Visioning Process  
 Educators' Roundtable  
 Jessica Perkins  
 February 27, 2020

1. To achieve a system of excellent schools, what must be the District's top priorities? What are the most important changes that District should make to positively transform the system?

Priorities	Changes within the Priority
Priority 1: Improve teacher quality and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase compensation and benefits to a regionally competitive rate</li> <li>▪ Provide teacher assistants, especially in elementary schools</li> <li>▪ Treat teachers as professionals; allow them to have autonomy and a voice in decision-making</li> <li>▪ Trust teachers will do their jobs</li> <li>▪ Provide more mental health supports for teachers and staff</li> <li>▪ Allow teachers to give their sick days to another employee</li> <li>▪ Renovate housing for teachers</li> </ul>
Priority 2: Improve the classroom environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Smaller class size; set lower caps than stipulated by DESE</li> <li>▪ Select curricula that works for children, at appropriate age and abilities</li> <li>▪ Update classroom technology and ensure that all classes have working smartboards</li> <li>▪ Provide Chromebooks and/or iPads for all students</li> </ul>
Priority 3: Support Families and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide before/afterschool care; afterschool should be later than 6:00 pm</li> <li>▪ Compensate teachers for covering before/afterschool events</li> <li>▪ Provide comprehensive wrap around services and staff with FT social workers, counselors, nurses for every building</li> <li>▪ Hire behavioral coaches to support teachers with social/emotional learning</li> </ul>
Priority 4: Hold Children to a Standard of Good Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish non-negotiables, i.e., everyone arrives on time and ready to learn</li> <li>▪ Ensure parents understand what is expected and what the consequences are</li> <li>▪ Address bad behavior consistently and equitably</li> </ul>
Priority 5: Deepen Policy Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for a fully funded budget at the state level</li> <li>▪ Advocate for universal PK in MO</li> </ul>
Priority 6: Change District Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No social promotions, especially for 3 to 5 years; if they aren't emotionally or socially ready, don't promote</li> <li>▪ Reduce SPED case load, so that specialists has more opportunity to work with students</li> <li>▪ Increase transparency across the board; principals and teachers need to know what is going on at the District level because it eventually trickles to the school level</li> </ul>

2. What critical factors should the District consider when determining whether to close and consolidate schools to resource major system changes?

Factor	Possible Rationale
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not sure capacity should be used.</li> <li>▪ SLPS children require more support and we shouldn't max capacity at most schools.</li> <li>▪ Hold capacity/class size below DESE standards.</li> </ul>
Performance Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance should not be a factor because a child's performance is impacted by so many variables – homelessness, trauma, etc.</li> </ul>
Community or Neighborhood Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What else is the school being used for? If used for afterschool programming, it should not be closed.</li> <li>▪ Closing a school could negatively impact an already divested area.</li> </ul>
School and Neighborhood Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerned about fighting across school lines.</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has the District ever looked at cost of directly providing bus service? It may be less expensive, especially with consolidation.</li> <li>▪ Current company isn't reliable.</li> </ul>
Intangibles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How can the District preserve school history, family legacy and sense of identity when a school closes?</li> </ul>
Charter School Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Closing a school with a higher concentration of neighborhood students may cause those students to attend the closest charter school.</li> </ul>

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**February 27, 2020**  
**April Warren-Grice**

**1. To achieve a system of excellent schools, what must be the District's top priorities? What are the most important changes that District should make to positively transform the system?**

Priorities	Changes within the Priority
Priority 1: Equity across the district in every	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Services</li> <li>• programs</li> </ul>
Priority 2: Improve leadership quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire leaders with a long-term plan based on data</li> <li>• Hire competent and experienced leaders with management skills, team building skills, people-skills, inter and intra-personal skills, instructional leadership skills, culturally relevant training skills, restorative discipline skills, and are leader-mentors</li> <li>• Ensure that leaders are connected to the community and community resources</li> <li>• Ensure leaders have clearly defined roles</li> </ul>
Priority 3: Incentivize highly qualified teachers to stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require less teaching to the test and more teaching students for the real world</li> <li>• Provide a competitive and fair salary</li> <li>• Search for teachers aggressively early during the year</li> <li>• Show teachers that they are trusted and valued by providing incentives</li> <li>• Trust teachers will do the job they were hired to do</li> <li>• Give teachers autonomy to do their job</li> <li>• Small class sizes and student-teacher ratio</li> <li>• Increase diversity of teachers</li> </ul>
Priority 4: SEL support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire more social workers, counselors, nurses for every building for students, staff, and families</li> <li>• Provide academic and behavioral plans for each student</li> <li>• Provide ongoing SEL and Trauma informed training for each staff member</li> <li>• Hire behavioral coaches to help teachers with behavioral, SEL, and trauma issues</li> </ul>
Priority 5: Strong community involvement and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide experiential learning—coding, maker-space,</li> <li>• Partner with local businesses for internships, fieldtrips, project based learning</li> <li>• Partner with parents and community members who can volunteer or provide their expertise</li> <li>• Parent teacher conferences that are flexible so parents can attend—morning, afternoon, and evening time slots</li> </ul>
Priority 6: State of the art buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All facilities work—temperature control, falling ceilings, aesthetics,</li> <li>• State of the art technology in each building</li> </ul>
Priority 7: System of internal customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly</li> <li>• Problem-solving oriented</li> </ul>

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Factor	Possible Rationale
Neighborhood safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some communities don't get along due to gang violence</li> </ul>
Outcomes and successes of schools that consolidated before within the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was the impact? Do they have more or less resources?</li> </ul>
Performance Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kids come to the district with various performance levels and teachers get blamed for it when they haven't had the students all year</li> </ul>
Marketing isn't fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some schools were marketed much more than others</li> </ul>
Closing schools will add to the destruction of the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Closing schools creates a domino effect of destroying neighborhoods. What will happen to the communities where the schools closed? Where will homeless students go?</li> </ul>
Did the district try all avenues before deciding to close a school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where is the data demonstrating the supports and resources given and implemented?</li> </ul>