I. Overview

Sixty-five participants, representing St. Louis' faith-based institutions met on Thursday, March 5, 2020 for two hours to share their unique perspectives about creating a system of excellent schools. The roundtable's purpose was to gather audience specific input into the District's transformation efforts, using the clergy's insights to lay the groundwork for a shared vision of education in St. Louis City. At the roundtable, held in conjunction with the District's Community Visioning workshops, participants:

- Learned about the current and evolving state of SLPS;
- Identified top priorities to help guide the District's efforts with partners; and
- Reflected on the District's criteria for school closure and consolidation decisions.

II. Program and Activity Synopsis

While each of the six unique audience roundtables (non-profit partners, clergy, students, parents, teachers and principals) were similar in content and format, some discussions questions were changed slightly to reflect the audience's perspective.

Dr. Adams began the workshops with a high-level overview of the District under his leadership. He delivered a PowerPoint presentation that explained the District's Transformation Plan 3.0, a document that operationalizes SLPS's commitment to building a system of excellent schools, and highlighted both system and school successes during his last 10 years. He also enumerated what makes the District unique, which includes, but is not limited to:

- The vulnerable student populations it serves,
- The prevalence of choice / magnet schools,
- Its largely independent funding of early childhood education, and
- Its costly special education requirements under the city's legacy desegregation agreement.

Dr. Adams maintained that these points of distinction contribute to the District's challenging operating conditions, which are exacerbated by declines in the city's student population, an increasing number of charter schools in the education landscape, and costly inefficiencies, like the District's aging school buildings and $30M+, three-tiered busing program. While he noted these realities, comparing them to conditions faced by similarly sized Districts in the region and the state, he also presented elements of a vision that would eventually make SLPS more competitive and impactful. To help underwrite this vision, he spoke about possible school closures and consolidations and then invited participants to share their thoughts and reflections.

III. Small Group Discussion and Key Findings

Faith-based representatives were divided into three small groups and they responded to the following five questions:

1. When you think of the St. Louis Public School system as it is today, what one or two words would you use to describe it?
2. When you imagine a system of excellent schools, what comes to mind?
3. To achieve the system that you described, what must be the district's top priorities and changes?
4. Do you agree with the criteria that the district has used to inform its school closure and consolidation decisions? Provide your rationales. What additional factors should the district consider when determining whether to close and consolidate schools to resource major system changes?
5. What might be done to lessen the impacts of school closures on district stakeholders and communities?

During the roundtable discussions, facilitators captured insights from each small group discussion on flip chart paper. The input obtained was subsequently clustered to reveal recurring themes and redundancies. These themes are ideas that generated traction in the public discourse and are presented by question in this report. They are accompanied by supporting statements that help to illuminate participants' thinking. Findings for all five lines of inquiry have been summarized on the following pages for ease of reference and review.

Complete findings from each clergy roundtable small group discussion are catalogued in this report's appendices.

QUESTION 1: When you think of the St. Louis Public School system as it is today, what one or two words would you use to describe it?

SLPS Descriptors

The first discussion question posed to each small group gave participants an opportunity to describe the current state of the District using one or two words. The participants offered nearly 60 words, which were clustered into three areas of focus – perceptions of the system, its outcomes and its people.
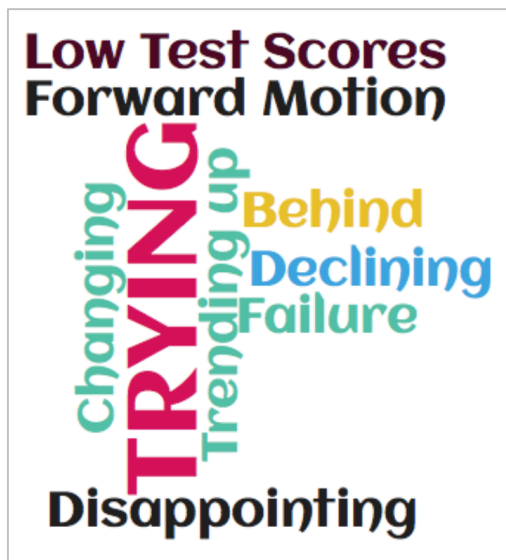
Roughly 50% of the descriptors were assigned to the system word cloud; and equally, the remaining descriptors were assigned to either the outcomes or the people word cloud.

The descriptors are graphically presented as word clouds. For each word cloud, the largest text is associated with the greatest frequency of mentions while smaller text indicates words that were used less often.

Perceptions of the System

Revamp Rethink and Regroup Failure
Last Choice
CHALLENGED
STRUGGLING
Sabotaged In need of help
Mixed bag Out of Date Resurrecting Fair Looking Quality is Essential Accomplishing Failed system Data driven Abandoned Needy
LACKING RESOURCES
Transition

Perceptions of Outcomes

Low Test Scores
Forward Motion
Changing TRYING Trending up Behind Declining Failure
Disappointing

Perceptions of People

Family engagement Progressive Hopeful
Inclusive
Better leadership
Fighting hard
Disconnected
Understaffed
Full of Beautiful Children Students

QUESTION 2: When you imagine a system of excellent schools, what comes to mind?

What Excellence Looks Like

After reflecting on SLPS's current state, small group participants were asked to describe a system of excellent schools. Their responses greatly overlapped with the district's Transformation Plan 3.0 and are clustered along the plan's five pillars.

Note: Black text indicates that the clergy's responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to the clergy roundtable.

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">
PILLAR I & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT CREATES A SYSTEM OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

■ Student Attendance & Enrollment
■ Safe & Secure Schools
■ Financial Sustainability
■ Efficient & Equitable Staffing
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2" align="center">COMMUNITY VISION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
<i>Schools are emotionally, mentally, and physically safe.</i>

All staff have been trained to be culturally responsive / competent.
Bullying, fighting and arguing are minimized, for all students, and especially for LGBTQIA+ students.
Safety is a priority.

</td>
<td>
<i>The District is fully funded and resources are fully utilized.</i>

The District is fully staffed, with great leaders.
The district has money and resources to provide all necessary services.

</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">
<i>Comprehensive planning and community accountability is conducted and shared.</i>

The District has a comprehensive plan and milestone progress is regularly communicated to all stakeholders, including staff, students, families and the community.
In schools and the community, there is alignment around a common vision and shared goals.

</td>
</tr>
</table>

Note: Black text indicates that the clergy's responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to the clergy roundtable.

PILLAR II & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT ADVANCES FAIRNESS AND EQUITY ACROSS ITS SYSTEM

- ■ Workforce Diversity
- ■ Equitable Resource Distribution
- ■ Trauma-Informed Classrooms

COMMUNITY VISION

All students have equitable access to high quality instruction and programs ▪ Resources are dispersed equitably, regardless of student ethnicity and school location. ▪ All students have access to electives like art, music, AP courses, languages and other specialty courses. ▪ Special education and ELA students are able to access the resources they need.	***Mental wellness is a priority.*** ▪ Trauma informed care is the norm. ▪ Teachers are trauma informed. ▪ Trauma informed practices are actionable and accountable. ▪ More school support services are available to help students and staff be ready to learn joyfully. ▪ Schools are responsive to all types of trauma and staff are equipped to respond to students' needs.
All students have equitable access to high quality instruction and programs. ▪ All schools are resourced equitably. ▪ All students have access to electives like art, music, AP courses, languages and other specialty courses.	***Curricula are equitable and culturally relevant*** ▪ Students have equitable outcomes – their backgrounds do not determine their performance and graduation.

PILLAR III & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT CULTIVATES TEACHERS AND LEADERS WHO FOSTER EFFECTIVE, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- ■ Career Pathways
- ■ Teacher Retention
- ■ Culturally Responsive Schools

COMMUNITY VISION

Educators are highly qualified and invested. ▪ All teachers are highly educated and certified. ▪ Teachers and principals are invested, caring, and willing to go the extra mile. ▪ Minimal turnover of teachers. ▪ Staff are afforded intentional and high quality professional development and opportunities. ▪ Teachers are qualified and passionate about their craft and children.	***Staff are well supported and empowered.*** ▪ Teachers are provided competitive compensation, benefits and incentives. ▪ Teachers have more autonomy.
Excellence is the standard expectation. ▪ Excellence is the norm. ▪ Issues of chronic truancy are addressed by wrapping students and families with support. ▪ High student performance. ▪ Every student improves and is proficient in ELA and math.	***Classes are structured to promote learning.*** ▪ Classrooms are updated with the latest technology. ▪ Students have reliable access to technology out-of-school.

Note: Black text indicates that the clergy's responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to the clergy roundtable.

PILLAR IV & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: ALL STUDENTS LEARN TO READ AND SUCCEED
■ Student Reading Proficiency ■ College & Career Readiness ■ English Language Learner Success
COMMUNITY VISION
Curricula are focused on preparing students for post high school. ▪ Curricula prepare students for participation in the trades and for non-college careers. ▪ The District has strong college counseling and gifted programs.

PILLAR V & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES SUPPORT THE DISTRICT'S TRANSFORMATION PLAN	
■ Volunteer & Mentor Engagement ■ Community & District Pride ■ Community Partner Investment	
COMMUNITY VISION	
Partnerships are formed to provide additional supports to students. ▪ The District cultivates partnerships with non-profits and service agencies to address issues of trauma and poverty. ▪ There is stronger coordination and communication across the systems that are responsible for child well-being, i.e., mental health, healthcare, housing and justice.	*Community support and buy-in.* ▪ There is sincere buy-in and support from the community for the District.

In addition to the discussion themes that arose within the District's five pillars, there were three additional themes – parent and family and community engagement, leadership and student support and resources – that emerged for participants when thinking about a system of excellent schools.

Parent & Family Engagement	Student Supports & Resources	Leadership

ADDITIONAL PILLAR & CORRESPONDING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES – EX. PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- **Ex. Parental Involvement in Learning**
- **Ex. Parental Supports & Services**

Parents Are more actively engaged with and supportive of schools. - The district has money and resources to provide all necessary services. - Increased parent participation. - Deepened relationship with families through efforts that more effectively address their needs.	**Parents are supported by schools.** - Families are provided additional supports, which address special needs. - Create "Places for People" – parenting classes to support common parenting challenges and trauma informed care.

ADDITIONAL PILLAR & CORRESPONDING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES – HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

- **Schools Are Well Resourced**
- **Schools Have Extracurricular Programs**
- **Students Have Access to a Variety of High Quality Programs & Services**

Students have the resources necessary to access education. - Students have increased academic support outside of the classroom. - More specialists can provide one-on-one attention to students without them having an IEP. - Bus transportation is timely and consistent. - Issues of chronic truancy are addressed by wrapping students and families with support.	**Student services include afterschool, extracurricular, and enrichment programs** - Afterschool and extracurricular activities and programs are provided at all grade levels and meet the needs of students.

All schools are fully staffed with support professionals
- All schools have a full staff of support service professionals (social worker, counselors, nurses, and academic/behavioral evaluator.

ADDITIONAL PILLAR & CORRESPONDING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES – DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

- **Effective Leadership**
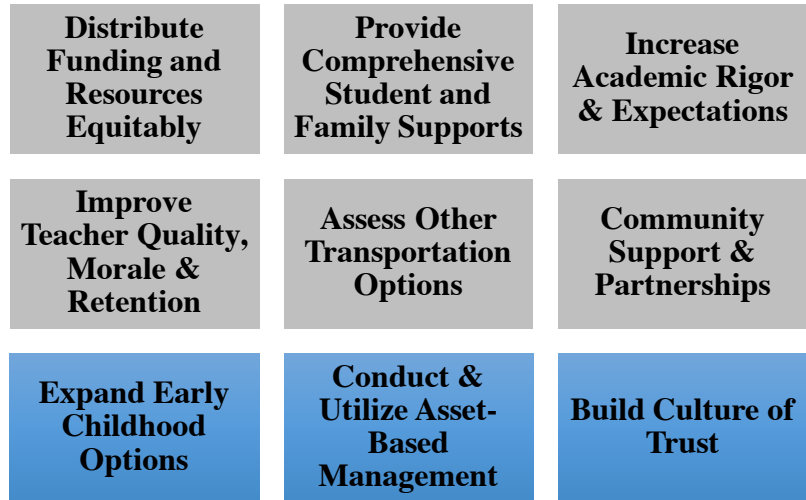- **Qualified Administrators**

Leadership is high quality leadership throughout the district.
- There is high quality leadership throughout the system as a whole.
- Minimal turnover of principals.

QUESTION 3: How might the District work with its community partners to achieve the system of excellence that you described?

Participants' Top Priorities

Having developed their visions for a system of excellent schools, community partners were asked to consider where SLPS should focus its transformation efforts to yield the greatest positive impacts. In response to this question, they generated thirteen priorities, which fell within all the District's five pillars. These priorities, which are presented with

supporting statements that clarify the changes the clergy want the district to make, are captured to the right. All priorities in gray boxes were also mentioned during the community visioning workshops. The priorities suggested in the blue boxes were expressed specifically by the clergy.

Distribute Funding and Resources Equitably	**Provide Comprehensive Student and Family Supports**	**Increase Academic Rigor & Expectations**
Improve Teacher Quality, Morale & Retention	**Assess Other Transportation Options**	**Community Support & Partnerships**
Expand Early Childhood Options	**Conduct & Utilize Asset-Based Management**	**Build Culture of Trust**

Pillar I
Assess Other Transportation Options
- First Student is a horrible provider. The District needs to contract with another provider or consider providing bus service directly. Other Districts provide service directly and have cost savings.
- Students should spend more time in school and less time on buses at unreasonable hours
- Look at ways of decreasing travel times, such as students attending schools closer to their residences.

Conduct and Utilize Asset-Based Management
- Review what the District is doing well and replicate that across all schools.
- Conduct asset-based or strengths-based assessment for individual schools and their staffs.

Create a Culture of Trust and Accountability
- Share the District's mission and vision with EVERYONE and ask them how the can contribute to achieving the mission and vision
- Make EVERYONE accountable for doing their part.
- Build more trust and cohesion between students, families and schools.

Pillar II
Distribute Funding and Resources Equitably Across Schools (Pillar II)
- Ensure neighborhood schools get more resources. They should not have to be magnet schools or special schools to get the resources that they need to serve students effectively.
- Offer more equitable funding access to social programs and social services across more SLPS schools.

Pillar III
Improve Teacher Quality, Relationships, Morale and Retention (Pillar III)
- Develop better compensation and benefits plans.
- Provide extensive professional development and mentoring for new and low performing teachers.
- Encourage and incentivize stellar performance through awards and rewards.
- Prepare teachers for working with students of poverty by having them to go through poverty simulations.
- Evaluate staff's characteristics and match them to the appropriate school. If their performance doesn't meet the District's expectations, recommend retirement or a change in position.

- Advocate for and encourage team teaching (pair seasoned teachers with new teachers).
- Be more transparent (to teachers and the public) with salary scale.

Pillar IV
Increase Academic Rigor and Expectations for Success (Pillar IV)
- Review promising and successful curricula and implement appropriately.
- Ensure curriculum meets the needs of students, regardless of their post-secondary options.
- Challenge students intellectually and set higher expectations for them.
- Lower student/teacher ratio to ensure students have a greater opportunity to learn and succeed.
- Bring more technology into the classroom.
- Reduce the emphasis on testing. This takes away from instruction time. The focus needs to be on critical thinking, not on learning the test.

Expand Early Childhood Education Offering (Expansion of Pillar IV)
- Offer more PK programs in schools.
- Initiate early intervention for reading support starting in PK.
- Place even greater emphasis on early childhood education. All young children need this foundation in order to be ready for school.

Pillar V
Expand Partnership and Community Support (Expansion of Pillar V)
- As a model, replicate the non-profit volunteer management process, which includes an easy application process, meaningful assignments and recognition.
- Facilitate a less onerous and lengthy volunteer application process. Hire more staff to manage volunteer recruitment, management and coordination.
- Widen the base of community support for students and schools. This support has eroded significantly over time.
- Increase parent involvement and build connections with families.
- Develop more community events around the school, so neighbors get to know each other.
- Have community members volunteer at schools.
- Recruit more black male mentors from 100 Black Men, churches, HBCU's and fraternities

Expansion to Pillars IV or V
Provide Comprehensive Student and Family Supports
- Fully staff student and family support services.
- Offer counseling and parenting classes for parents.
- Assist parents consistently with transportation.
- Offload principals and teachers by ensure each school is fully staffed with support personnel. Without staff, there can be teacher and principal burnout, attrition and lower morale.

QUESTION 4A: Do you agree with the criteria that the district has used to inform its school closure and consolidation decisions? Provide your rationales.

General Critiques of the District's Existing Criteria

During his opening presentation, Dr. Adams explained the five criteria (academic performance; building capacity; building condition and age; feeder patterns; and economic development) that the district previously used to inform its school closure and consolidation decisions. Small groups later discussed these criteria, offering general critiques along with more specific feedback on each criterion. Note: All responses to this question were expressed at the clergy's roundtable.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	
2016-2019 Years of Academic, Attendance, Graduation, College & Career Data	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ The performance of student should not be considered. If a student is in a struggling school, they may still be considered "low achieving", but the student may have grown several grade levels. Thus, the student has grown substantially but the system still says they are underperforming—which is not fair.

CAPACITY	
Maximum Building Capacity Divided By Its Average 3-Year Enrollment	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ No comment.

BUILDING CONDITION	
Facility Capital Action Plan (FCAP) Outlines Age, Condition, Deferred Maintenance & Capital Improvement Projects & Categorizes Projects By Building, System & Priority	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ Yes, this should be considered. SLPS also needs to evaluate buildings to determine if they can be repurposed.	▪ The building's condition matters—but who is deciding what is "too old" to rehabilitate? Charter schools are turning around and rehabbing the same buildings SLPS says were too old. Is it really too expensive to maintain? Can the buildings be made to be accessible first? Can the building have a multipurpose use with various non-profits and local businesses? ▪ Has the District performed a benefit/cost analysis to assess the feasibility of maintaining its old buildings versus building new ones?

FEEDER PATTERNS	
Analysis Of Pathways For Transitioning Students From Elementary School To Middle School & From Middle School To High School	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ Feeder patterns must be considered because these are positive for student and community engagement. Especially when all students from the same family and neighborhood can attend the same schools. How do we better show up for the Black and Brown students in these communities?	▪ Considered only if the District is committed to more neighborhood schools.

CITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT	
Data Collected From The City Planning Department	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ The City has not considered the negative impacts of TIFs and tax abatements on the local school system and St. Louis' children. There needs to be greater political accountability. ▪ Many development efforts have moved people out of the City of St. Louis.

QUESTION 4B: What other critical factors should the District consider when determining whether to close and consolidate schools to resource major system change?

Additional Factors for Consideration

In addition to the five criteria that the district used in its last round of school closures and consolidations, the clergy suggested five other factors that they want the district to consider in its school assessment process. Two factors – transportation time and cost; and neighborhood development and impact – were voiced during the community visioning workshops. The remaining three factors were not.

Transportation Time and Cost
- ▪ Transportation time should not exceed 30 minutes.
- ▪ Larger buses are the norm, but transporting a smaller number of students may be best because fewer trips are made and students are on bus for a shorter time.
- ▪ If travel time is too long or to inconvenient, parents will look for other choices like charter schools and other districts.

Neighborhood Development and Impact
- ▪ At one time, schools indicated neighborhood vitality. If a school is closed, SLPS should look at how much the neighborhood could or would be impacted by the closure.
- ▪ Schools are the first things that people assess when making housing and home ownership decisions. The District needs to make serious investments in neighborhoods as a means of staunching their decline and attracting a growing residential base. This is in the best interest of both the school system and the City.
- ▪ Budget transparency: Where does the money go that was operating the school in the neighborhood after it closes? Should it go back to the community?
- ▪ SLPS must consider the holistic health and economics of the community where they are closing a school
  - o What are the transportation constraints?
  - o What are the tardy/absence rates?

School Progress
- Look at the efforts that are taking place inside of struggling schools. If schools are making strides and significant progress, do not shut them down.

Concentration of Neighborhood Students
- Families and students have more connection to a school, if it is in their neighborhood. Look at how many students are attending from the neighborhood. If it is above a certain percentage (40-50%), SLPS should reconsider closing that school.
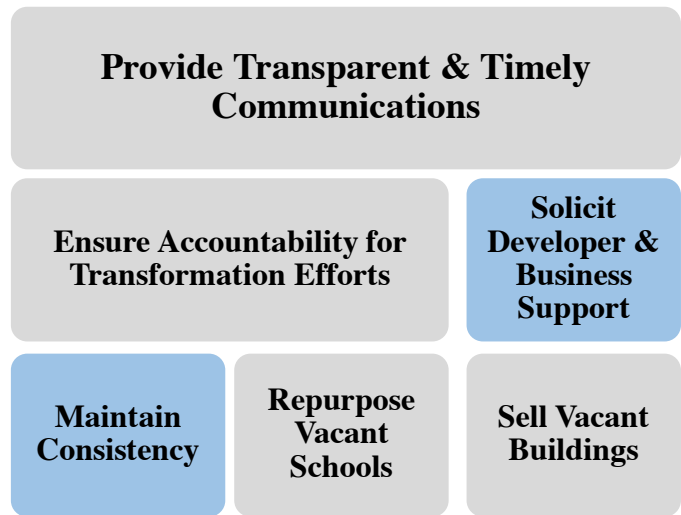
Projected Classroom Size
- Will closures increase classroom size? If so, how will this impact the learning of children who are possibly struggling academically?
- Establish an ideal or optimal classroom size and maintain it, even with newly added students

QUESTION 5: What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on your organizations and those you serve?

Recommendations for Mitigating Adverse Impacts

As shown on the right, roundtable participants suggested 6 recommendations for lessening the negative impacts of school closures. The recommendations in the grey boxes indicate these specific recommendations were also voiced mostly frequently at the community visioning sessions; and the blue boxes represent recommendations specific to community partners.

Provide Transparent & Timely Communications		
Ensure Accountability for Transformation Efforts		Solicit Developer & Business Support
Maintain Consistency	Repurpose Vacant Schools	Sell Vacant Buildings

Provide Transparent & Timely Communications

- After the community visioning process, inform the community in a timely manner and ensure they understand how schools were selected, why they were selected and how students and staff will benefit from the relocation.
- There will be an impact of a school closing regardless, so spend money on marketing materials to talk to the community about the impacts and opportunities of the school closing in an honest and transparent way. Explain why it's in the best interest of the community to close the school.
- Give students, families and staff sufficient time to make adjustments and to pursue for the best options.

Ensure Accountability for Transformation Efforts
- Included with transparent and timely communications, explain the cost savings projected from closing and consolidating schools. Let the public know how the District will allocate the funds and demonstrate how the District intends to monitor outcomes to ensure efficacy.
- Be clear with stakeholders and parents about where money is being reallocated and how it will be used. Keep money in the community where school was uprooted.
- Review the District's budget, line-by-line, and eliminate waste. Use these dollars to provide additional funds for transformation.

Solicit Economic Support from Developers & Businesses
- Obtain a memorandum of understanding (MOU) from developers and local businesses to support schools financially. Get a MOU so SLPS will have a hard commitment. What can the developers and businesses do right now to support the school and the surrounding community?
- Ask developers and corporations to pay their fair share (~$300M) in order to fund building maintenance and rehabilitation. An investment of this magnitude will position the District for growth.

Repurpose Vacant Schools
- Pursue alternate uses for school buildings, without selling them off. Look for other, complimentary use tenants that can also utilize the buildings.
- Consider the school as a possible site for before and afterschool programming, not only for the students, but for people living in the neighborhood.

Maintain Consistency
- As much as possible, transfer staff to the new school, i.e., same bus driver, same janitor, same teachers. This will help students re-acclimate to new school.
- Move staff from closed schools with students to new locations in order to ensure consistency in relationship and school culture. This also helps to prevent reductions in academic performance.

Sell Vacant Schools
- Do not let closed schools sit empty. Be aggressive about finding buyers to purchase and occupy the buildings.

V. Conclusion

The findings in this report seek to accurately convey the clergy's unique sentiments communicated at St. Louis Public Schools' community visioning roundtables. These roundtables provided the clergy an opportunity to weigh in on SLPS transformation efforts, with specific foci on creating a system of excellent schools and redirecting district resources. District leaders are now in a position to incorporate the intelligence and insights of community partners into their deliberations as they reimagine and reconfigure the city's portfolio of schools to advance the learning and life success of all St. Louis children.

APPENDIX
Small Group Summaries

St. Louis Public School District
Community Visioning Process
Community Visioning Workshop
Clergy Roundtable – Thursday, March 5, 2020
Rebeccah Bennett

<div align="center">

Small Group Discussion Flip Chart Notes

</div>

1. **When you think of the St. Louis Public Schools as it is today, what one or two words would you use to describe it?**

SYSTEM	SERVICES	CULTURE / CONTEXT	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
▪ Struggling / challenged (3) ➔ On the edge ▪ In need of help (2) ▪ Accomplishing ▪ Data driven ▪ Trying / willing to become better ▪ Sabotaged	▪	▪ Progressive ▪ Inclusive	▪ Low test scores ▪ Behind	▪ Students ▪ Declining ▪ Full of beautiful children ▪ Family engagement ▪ Understaffed ▪ Not serviced with appropriate staff

2. **When you think of a system of excellent schools, what comes to mind?**

Faculty & Staff ▪ More teacher accountability ▪ More professional development for teachers ▪ Increased compensation	*Increased Student Support Services & Resources* ▪ More support, including family services that address special needs ▪ Every school has a full-time nurse, social worker, counselor, and academic / behavioral evaluator ▪ Better support system to ensure that school age children are in school. Issues of chronic truancy are addressed by wrapping students and families with supports ▪ Stronger coordination and communication across the systems that are responsible for child well-being i.e. mental health, healthcare, housing, justice systems…
Leadership & Culture ▪ Fully staffed with great leaders ▪ Higher standards overall ▪ Excellent District leadership that focuses on what is best for students (ex. Dr. Tiffany Anderson, former Superintendent of Jennings School District and leadership at Ferguson/Florissant, Columbia etc.) Alignment around a common vision and shared goals	*Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships* ▪ Increased parent participation ▪ Deepened relationship building with families through efforts that more effectively address their needs
Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences ▪ Increased academic support outside of the classroom ➔ More specialists who can provide one-on-one attention to the children, without them having to have an IEP	*Student Performance / Educational Outcomes* ▪ High student performance ▪ Equitable outcomes – students' backgrounds do not determine their performance and graduation Every year, every student improves in ELA and math
Funding ▪ More resources	*Miscellaneous* ▪ More consistency and dependability in bus transportation. Buses often come late and sometimes do not come at all

3. To achieve the system that you described, 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: Decreased Travel Times	▪ Have students spend more time in schools and less time on buses at unreasonable hours.
	  ➔ First Student is horrible. The District needs a different transportation provider. Can it provide bus services directly? Other Districts have done this and lessened their costs.
	  ➔ If more students go to schools near where they live, this would decrease travel times.

Priority 2: Equitable Funding	▪ Ensure that neighborhood schools get more resources. They should not have to be magnet schools or special schools to get the resources that they need to serve students effectively.
Priority 3: Comprehensive Student & Family Supports	▪ Fully staff student and family support services. ➔ Principals and teachers are pulled in so many directions without having adequate support staffing. The result is staff burnout, attrition and lower morale.
Priority 4: Relationship & Trust Building	▪ Build more trust and cohesion between students, families and schools.
Priority 5: Community Support & Partnerships	▪ Widen the base of community support for students and schools. This support has eroded significantly over time. ▪ Make the volunteer application process less onerous and lengthy. Hire more staff to process volunteer applications.
Priority 6: Academic Rigor	▪ Increase academic rigor. Children have to be challenged intellectually. ▪ Bring more technology into the classroom ▪ Reduce the emphasis on testing. This takes away from instruction time. The focus needs to be on critical thinking, not on learning the test.
Priority 7: Early Childhood Education	▪ Place even greater emphasis on early childhood education. All young children need this foundation in order to be ready for school.

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

Factor	Possible Rationale
▪ **Existing Factor:** City-Wide Development	▪ *The City has not considered the negative impacts of TIFs and tax abatements on the local school system and St. Louis' children. There needs to be greater political accountability.* ▪ *Many development efforts have moved people out of the City of St. Louis.*
▪ **Existing Factor:** Building Age & Condition	▪ *Has the District performed a benefit/cost analysis to assess the feasibility of maintaining its old buildings versus building new ones?*
▪ Neighborhood Development	▪ *Schools are the first things that people assess when making housing and home ownership decisions. The District needs to make serious investments in neighborhoods as a means of staunching their decline and attracting a growing residential base. This is in the best interest of both the school system and the City.*
▪ Travel / Transportation Time	▪ *If schools close, where will students go? How close will their next schools be? If the options are too inconvenient, parents will look for other choices like charter schools and other districts.*
▪ School Progress	▪ *Look at the efforts that are taking place inside of struggling schools. If schools are making strides and significant progress, do not shut them down.*

5. What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on neighborhoods and communities?

▪ **Raise $300 Million:** Get developers and corporations to pay their fair share in order to fund building maintenance and rehabilitation. An investment of this magnitude will position the District for growth.	▪ **Repurpose Buildings:** Pursue alternate uses for school buildings, without selling them off. Look for other, complimentary use tenants that can also utilize the buildings.
▪ **Account For Spending:** Go through the District's budget line by line to eliminate waste. Use these dollars to support transformation efforts.	▪ **Sell Vacant Buildings:** Do not let closed schools sit empty. Be aggressive about finding buyers to purchase and occupy the buildings.
▪ **Provide Timely Communication:** Give students, families and staff sufficient time to make adjustments and to pursue for the best options.	▪ **Repurpose Already Vacant Buildings:** Offer schools that are already vacant to non-profit organizations that are investing in the community.
▪ **Staff Placement:** Move staff from closed schools with students to new locations in order to ensure consistency in relationship and school culture. This also helps to prevent reductions in academic performance.	▪

St. Louis Public School District
Community Visioning Process
Community Visioning Workshop
SLPS, Clergy – Tuesday, March 5, 2020
Chelsey Carter

<u>**Small Group Discussion Flip Chart Notes**</u>

1. **When you think of the St. Louis Public Schools as it is today, what one or two words would you use to describe it?**

SYSTEM	SERVICES	CULTURE / CONTEXT	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
▪ Mixed Bag ▪ Failed System ▪ Overtaxed ▪ Transition ▪ Hard to Navigate Administration		▪ Trending Up ▪ Forward Motion ▪ Fighting Hard ▪ Hopeful ▪ Resurrecting	▪ Disappointing ▪ Failure ▪ Struggling ▪ Abandoned ▪ Quality is essential for future	▪ Inclusive ▪ Needy

2. **When you think of a system of excellent schools, what comes to mind?**

Faculty & Staff ▪ Full staffing- more social workers, nurses ▪ Full support services- ELA classes, SPED, after school care ▪ High quality teachers that are supported by a good salary, benefits, and incentives	***Increased Student Support Services & Resources*** ▪ Developing full wrap around services
Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion ▪ Safety measures and more anti-bullying support for LGBTQIA+ students ▪ Equitable funding practices across schools in system ▪ Racial equity in schools	***Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships*** ▪ Improved parent communication ▪ Create "Places for people" – parenting classes to support common parenting challenges and trauma-informed care
Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences ▪ Diverse classes and electives (art, band, choir, etc.) ▪ More electives and after school extracurriculars ▪	***Student Performance / Educational Outcomes*** ▪ High expectations for student performance ▪ The students going on to Higher Education or Trade Schools
Stronger Community Connections & Engagement ▪ Volunteer opportunities for community members, parents, and students ▪ Stronger preK-8 community schools	***Heightened Safety*** ▪ Make safety a priority

3. To achieve the system that you described, 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: Utilize SLPS' good qualities	▪ Spread the "love" of all of SLPS's strongest skills and achievements to low performing schools.
Priority 2: Equity to programs and services	▪ Offer more equitable funding access to social programs and social services across more SLPS schools ▪ Vote for local, state, and federal politicians and get them involved
Priority 3: Racial Equity	▪ More black male mentors ○ Recruit from 100 Black Men, churches, HBCU's, fraternities ▪ Develop more trainings on equity, inclusion, and diversity specific to St. Louis' history of race and segregation ▪ Hire more Black and Brown teachers intentionally ▪ Anti-racism training and development for white teachers
Priority 4: Stronger Community Awareness and Neighborly connections	▪ Develop more community events arounds the school that neighbors get to know each other ▪ Have community members volunteer at schools
Priority 5: Parent / Family Engagement	▪ Offer counseling and parenting classes for parents ▪ Offer food and childcare for parent events and PTO ▪ Assist parents consistently with transpiration ▪ Reconsider developing more feeder patterns and reopening schools in certain neighborhoods ▪ Consider siblings and feeder patterns when placing students in certain schools
Priority 6: Improve Teacher Recruitment & Retention Pipeline	▪ Develop better compensation and benefits plans ▪ Transparency of salary scale with public and teachers (i.e., is salary set? How is salary negotiated?)
Priority 7: Essential Supplies & Resources for Students	▪ Make sure all students have access to updated textbooks and technology ▪ Make sure all students have internet at home ▪ Fund underperforming schools with more resources ▪ Collaborate and partner with local businesses and non-profits to address needs of the community and invest in community (i.e. Build Out, NGA, Unleashing Way)
Priority 8: Revaluate Budget	▪ Transparency with budget to parents and stakeholders ▪ Consider if schools are truly "too old" to rehabilitate ▪ Consider adding regional property tax assessment to improve equity and justice among schools in the Greater St. Louis area
Priority 9: Early Childhood Intervention	▪ Offer more pre-K programs in schools ▪ Early intervention for reading support starting in pre-K
Priority 10: Accessibility and Transportation	▪ Reallocate more resources to more than just busing students but to transport students within the area by offering more transportation to afterschool programs and activities
Priority 11: Transparency of Lottery System	▪ Questions posed by clergy: How does the lottery system function? Is it equitable? What percent of money goes to the school?

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

Factor	Possible Rationale
▪ **Existing Factor:** Performance	▪ *The performance of student should not be considered. The overall growth of the student is not considered when thinking about performance metrics. If a student is in a struggling school they may still be considered "low achieving" by the end of the school year but the student may have grown several grade levels. Thus, the student has grown substantially but the system still says they are underperforming—which is not fair.*
▪ **Existing Factor:** Building Age & Condition	▪ *The building's condition matters—but who is deciding what is "too old" to rehabilitate? Charter schools are turning around and rehabbing the same buildings SLPS says were too old. Is it really too expensive to maintain? Can the buildings be made to be accessible first? Can the building have a multipurpose use with various non-profits and local businesses?*
▪ **Existing Factor:** Feeder Patterns	▪ *Feeder patterns must be attended to because these are positive for student and community engagement. Especially when all students from the same family and neighborhood can attend the same schools. How do we better show up for the Black and Brown students in these communities?* ▪ *Develop more neighborhood schools*

▪ Economic Security of Existing Community	▪ *Budget transparency—where does the money go that was operating the school in the neighborhood after it closes? Should it go back to the community?*
	▪ *SLPS must consider the holistic health and economics of the community where they are closing a school*
	    ○ *What are the transportation constraints?*
	    ○ *What are the tardy/absence rates?*
	    ○ *Are parents working more and does that influence less parental involvement?*

5. **What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on neighborhoods and communities?**

▪ **Reallocate Funds:** Take money from restructuring schools and put into transportation. Create a budget that supports the local community after school closes.	▪ **Communicate & Develop Marketing Strategy:** Communicate early and effectively school will closed. There will be an impact of a school closing regardless so spend money on marketing materials to talk to the community about the impacts and opportunities of the school closing in an honest and transparent way. Especially explain why it's in the best interest of the community to close the school.
▪ **Transparency of Funds:** Be clear with stakeholders and parents about where money is being reallocated and how it will be used. Keep money in the community where school was uprooted.	▪ **Economic Support from Developers & Local Businesses:** Get a memorandum of understanding (MOU) from developers and local businesses to support schools financially. Get a MOU so SLPS will have a hard commitment. What can the developers and businesses do right now to support the school and the surrounding community?

St. Louis Public School District
Community Visioning Process
Community Visioning Workshop
Clergy Roundtable – Thursday, March 5, 2020
Jessica Perkins

Small Group Discussion Flip Chart Notes

1. **When you think of the St. Louis Public Schools as it is today, what one or two words would you use to describe it?**

SYSTEM	SERVICES	CULTURE / CONTEXT	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
▪ Out-of-date ▪ Lacking resources (2) ▪ Fair looking ▪ Rethink and regroup ▪ Revamp ▪ Last choice ▪ Struggling (2)			▪ Changing ▪ Trying	▪ Better leadership ▪ Disconnected

2. **When you think of a system of excellent schools, what comes to mind?**

Faculty & Staff ▪ Qualified and certified staff (principals, teachers, administrators, support, etc.) who are passionate about their craft and children ▪ Trained in trauma informed practices ▪ Minimal turnover of principals and teachers	***Increased Student Support Services & Resources*** ▪ Every school has a full-time nurse, social worker, counselor, and academic / behavioral evaluator ▪ Updated in-school technology and reliable access to technology out-of-school ▪ Equitably dispersed resources, regardless of student ethnicity and school location ▪ Strong college counseling and gifted education programs
Student Performance / Educational Outcomes ▪ A path for each student from PK to 12, regardless of post-HS interests ▪ All students meet and many students exceed academic outcomes set for them ▪ Every year, every student improves in ELA and math Equitable outcomes – students' backgrounds do not determine their performance and graduation	***Intentional Engagement and Involvement of Parents, Community and Partnerships*** ▪ Increased and positive parent involvement ▪ Collaborates with neighborhood, so appropriate resources are available to address school and community needs ▪ Cultivates partnerships with non-profits and service agencies to address issues – trauma, poverty,
Comprehensive Planning & Accountability ▪ System has a comprehensive plan and it is communicated to all stakeholders (staff, students, parents and community) ▪ Milestones are regularly communicated to stakeholders	***Student Performance / Educational Outcomes*** ▪ A path for each student from PK to 12, regardless of post-HS interests ▪ All students meet and many students exceed academic outcomes set for them ▪ Every year, every student improves in ELA and math ▪ Equitable outcomes – students' backgrounds do not determine their performance and graduation
Miscellaneous ▪ Culturally diverse (staff, families and students) ▪ Classrooms are orderly for teaching and learning	

3. To achieve the system that you described, 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: Inculcate Culture	▪ Share the District's mission and vision with EVERYONE and ask them how the can contribute to achieving the mission and vision ▪ Make EVERYONE accountable for doing their part.
Priority 2: Address Principal and Leadership Quality	▪ Evaluate staff's characteristics and match them to the appropriate school. If their performance doesn't meet the District's expectations, recommend retirement or a change in position. ▪ Advocate for and encourage team teaching (pair seasoned teachers with new teachers. ▪ Provide extensive professional development and mentoring for new and low performing teachers. ▪ Encourage and incentivize stellar performance through awards and rewards. ▪ Prepare teachers for working with students of poverty by having them to go through poverty simulations
Priority 3: Staff Compensation	▪ Double teacher salaries and benefits to make the District more competitive with other districts and to minimize turnover. ▪
Priority 4: Equitable Funding	▪ Ensure that neighborhood schools get more resources. They should not have to be magnet schools or special schools to get the resources that they need to serve students effectively.
Priority 5: Student Achievement	▪ Review promising and successful curricula and implement appropriately. ▪ Ensure curriculum meets the needs of students, regardless of their post-secondary options. ▪ Lower student/teacher ratio to ensure students have a greater opportunity to learn and succeed.
Priority 6: Welcoming Environment	▪ Ensure staff at receiving schools are welcoming to teachers, students and families ▪ Think about how welcoming the ECE centers are for younger students ▪ Spruce up the exteriors of all receiving schools
Priority 7: Community Support & Partnerships	▪ Widen the base of community support for students and schools. This support has eroded significantly over time. ▪ Look at the non-profit volunteer management process, which includes an easy application process, meaningful assignments and recognition. ▪ Increase parent involvement and build connections with families,
Priority 8: Asset-based Management	▪ Review what the District is doing well and replicate that across all schools ▪ Conduct asset-based or strengths-based assessment for individual schools and their staffs

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

Factor	Possible Rationale
▪ **Existing Factor:** Building Age & Condition	▪ Yes, this should be considered. SLPS also needs to evaluate buildings to determine if they can be repurposed.
▪ Classroom Size	▪ Will closures increase classroom size? If so, how will this impact the learning of children who are possibly struggling academically? ▪ Establish an ideal or optimal classroom size and maintain it, even with newly added students
▪ Travel / Transportation Time	▪ Transportation time should not exceed 30 minutes ▪ Larger buses are the norm, but transporting a smaller number of students may be best because fewer trips are made and students are on bus for a shorter time.
▪ Economic and Neighborhood Impact	▪ At one time, schools indicated neighborhood vitality. If a school is closed, SLPS should look at how much the neighborhood could or would be impacted by the closure.
▪ Number of Students Attending from the Neighborhood	▪ Families and students have more connection to a school, if it is in their neighborhood. Look at how many students are attending from the neighborhood. If it is above a certain percentage (40-50%), SLPS should reconsider closing that school.

5. **What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on neighborhoods and communities?**

▪ **Share Decisions with the Public:** After the community visioning process, inform the community in a timely manner and ensure they understand how schools were selected, why they were selected and how students and staff will benefit from the relocation.	▪ **Repurpose Buildings:** Pursue alternate uses for school buildings, without selling them off. Look for other, complimentary use tenants that can also utilize the buildings. Consider the school as a possible site for before school and afterschool programming, not only for the students but for people living in the neighborhood.
▪ **Provide Timely Communication:** Give students, families and staff sufficient time to make adjustments and to pursue for the best options.	▪ **Maintain Consistency:** As much as possible, transfer staff to the new school, i.e., same bus driver, same janitor, same teachers. This will help students re-acclimate to new school.