St. Louis Public Schools
Community Visioning Process
Community Partners Roundtable
Meeting Summary – March 11, 2020

I. Overview

Thirty-three participants, representing 25 St. Louis Public Schools' community partners met on Wednesday March 11, 2020 for two hours to share their unique perspectives about creating a system of excellent schools and improving non-profit partnerships to support the vision. 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 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.
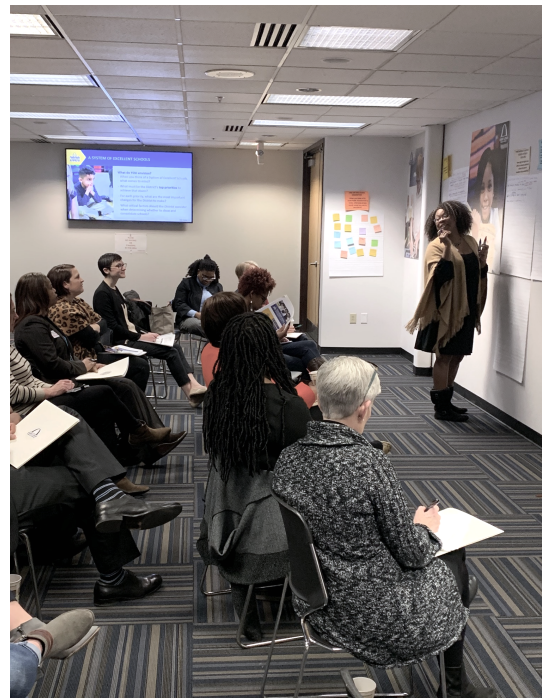
Dr. Adams maintained that these points of distinction contribute to the District's challenging operating conditions, which are exacerbated by declines in the city's student population, an increasing number of charter schools in the education landscape, and costly inefficiencies, like the District's aging 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

Community partners were divided into two 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. How might the District work with its community partners to achieve the system of excellence that you described? *NOTE: This questioned differed from the other five roundtables.*
4. What critical 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 closures on your organizations and those you serve? *NOTE: This questioned differed from the other five roundtables.*

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.

With the roundtable discussions augmenting the community visioning workshops, the synthesis and analysis objectives were to compare and contrast the responses for the same questions. In the case of the community partners' roundtable, questions 1, 2, and 4 were asked at all adult roundtables. However, for the community partners' roundtable, questions 3 and 5 are slightly different, as they relate specifically to the role of a community partner.

Complete findings from each small group discussion are catalogued by roundtable 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 thirty-three participants offered nearly 40 words, which were clustered into three areas of focus – perceptions of the system, its outcomes and its people.

Roughly 70% of the descriptors were assigned to the system word cloud; and most of the remaining descriptors were assigned to the people word cloud. Since there were only two descriptors, "low enrollment" and "growth", assigned to the outcomes word cloud, it was not created.

and two descriptors, "low enrollment" and "growth", were assigned to the outcomes word cloud. Therefore, there is no outcomes word cloud for this roundtable.

The descriptors are also 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.

Many of the same one-to-two word phrases assigned to the partners' roundtable systems and people word clouds mirror those expressed during the community visioning workshops.

Perceptions of the System
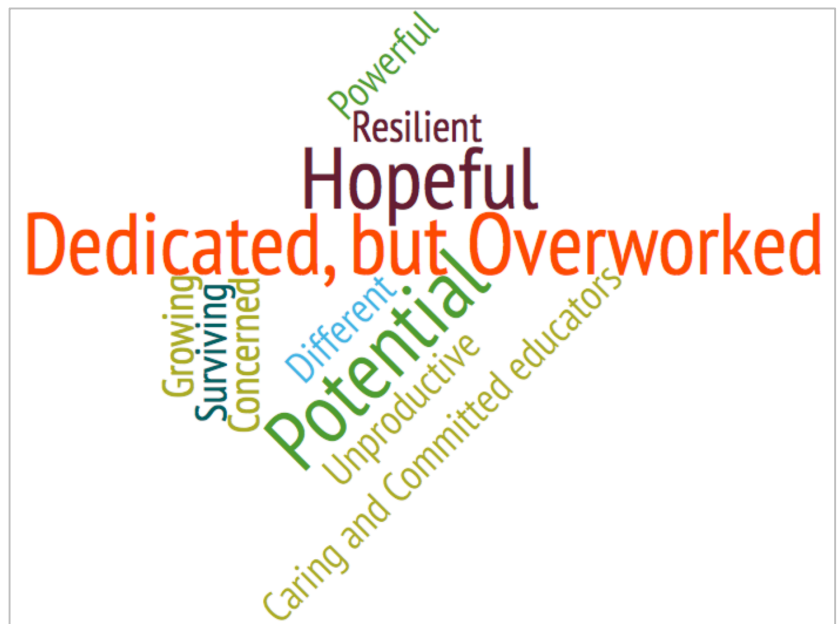
Perceptions of the District's People

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 community partners' responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to community partners.

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PILLAR I & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT CREATES A SYSTEM OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS
- Student Attendance & Enrollment
- Safe & Secure Schools
- Financial Sustainability
- Efficient & Equitable Staffing
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COMMUNITY VISION
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Schools are emotionally, mentally, and physically safe.
- Students and teachers are comfortable coming to school and there is no tolerance for anyone making people feel unwelcome or unsafe at school.
- Discipline policies are progressive and are not solely focused on punitive measures.
- The learning environment is enjoyable and staff and students know they matter.
- There is a culture of safety, support and respect in each building.
- There are social and emotional learning programs in place.
- District values and prioritizes the physical and social wellness of staff and students, just as much as academics.
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The District is fully funded and resources are fully utilized.
- The District is fully staffed.
- SLPS is a work environment in high demand. It is viewed as an employer of choice.
- The District practices fiscal responsibility.
- Resources are equitably distributed and learner focused.
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Note: Black text indicates that community partners' responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to community partners.

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

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

COMMUNITY VISION

Equity is at the center.
- Policies, practices and programs no longer disadvantage people of color in the system.
- All disparate polices and practices (e.g., $6M fee that SLPS must pay to the Special School District) that place the District at a disadvantage are eliminated.

All students have equitable access to high quality instruction and programs.	*Mental wellness is a priority.*
- All schools are resourced equitably. - All students have access to electives like art, music, AP courses, languages and other specialty courses.	- 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.

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.	*Staff are well supported and empowered.*
Staff are afforded intentional and high quality professional development and opportunities at all levels.	Teachers are provided competitive compensation and benefits.

Curricula & instruction are innovative, student-centered.
- Instruction is innovative and provides different learning opportunities, allowing for specialized instruction as needed.
- Students show an interest in learning and are provided more choices in their learning.

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

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. ▪ Innovative curricula, preparing students for participation in the trades and for non-college careers, are jointly developed by the business community and the District. ▪ SLPS is the testing ground for new ideas and approaches to learning. The District drives the educational conversation and is proactive in its transformation efforts. ▪ There is a strong emphasis on literacy and STEM.	***Afterschool, extracurricular and enrichment programs support learning.*** ▪ Afterschool and extracurricular activities and programs are provided at all grade levels and meet the needs of students. ▪ Mentorship programs are implemented that enable older students to mentor younger students.

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. ▪ District aligned partnerships are developed with the business and workforce development communities. ▪ Innovative curricula, preparing students for participation in the trades and for non-college careers, are jointly developed by the business community and the District. ▪ Each school has a set of community partners willing and ready to provide mentors, tutors, internships, and scholarships.	***Community support and buy-in.*** ▪ There is sincere buy-in and support from the community for the District. ▪ The community, along with families and the District, work together to benefit students. ▪ Community needs are supported by the school. The school is more than just a building – it is part of the community.

In addition to the discussion themes that arose within the District's five pillars, there was one additional theme – parent and family and community engagement – that emerged for participants when thinking about a system of excellent schools.

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

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

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Parents are more actively engaged with and supportive of schools.
- Parents are made to feel a part of the school community; they have a sense of belonging.
- Parents support, respect and trust the District.

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Schools support parents.
- Families are provided additional supports (wellness, groceries, education, housing) by advocates and community specialists.
- A community school model supports families with healthcare, therapeutic counseling, GED preparation and employment.
- A two-generational approach learning and support program, involving parents and students, is executed by the District.

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There is a culture of community unity
- Families, the surrounding community and the District work together to benefit students.

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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 four priorities, which fell within the three of the District's five pillars. These priorities, which are presented with supporting statements that clarify the changes that community partners want the district to make, are captured below. Three priorities (in gray boxes) were also mentioned during the community visioning workshops.

Apply a Racial Equity Lens for Service Delivery (Pillar II)
- In the service delivery of resources to schools and students, ensure the District applies a racial equity lens because resources that are given to some, but not others.

Cultivate a Thriving Partnership Program (Pillar V)
Centralize Partnership Information and Coordination
- Provide more centralized information, communication and coordination about the resources and services that the District's non-profit partners offer. This will help schools engage in needs analyses; reduce service duplications; and obtain faster access to critical services.
- Offer more clear and consistent communication about the District's policies and procedures. Also, make sure that external partners know who to contact and turn to regarding policies and issues.
- Follow through on materials needed in partnerships, which are agreed upon by SLPS.
- Align data and outcomes to better understand performance and efficacy of all partnerships.
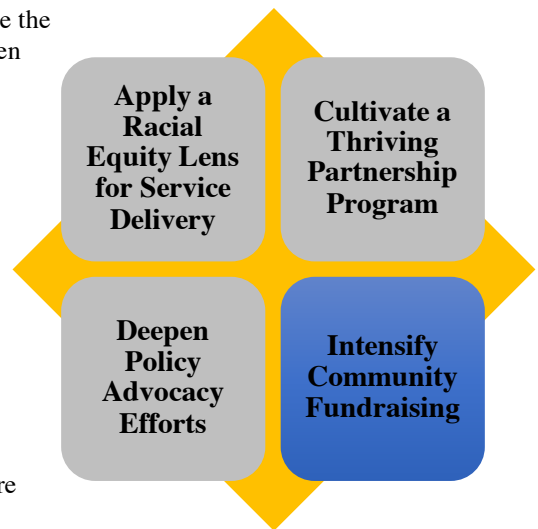
Improve the Partnering Process
- Assess the need for culturally competent wraparound services and identify appropriate partners by gauging alignment with the most optimal service providers. Reduce duplication among multiple partnerships by encouraging cross collaborations.
- Make the MOU process and formalization of partnerships easier; and minimize annual changes to the partnering process. It is extremely challenging to service providers; and much easier to provide services to charter and private schools.
- Engage community partners to be a part of the District's strategic planning process (like this roundtable) and request partners to execute critical parts of the plan, so that SLPS leverages its external resources.

Foster and Encourage a Welcoming and Collaborative School Environment
- Ensure a clearer understanding of and alignment around the resources that students, staff and schools need. Staff are so stressed that it is often difficult for them to specify and communicate what is most needed and beneficial.
- Ensure principals and other impacted school staff receive information proactively about partnerships. This is critically important for smooth service delivery.
- Encourage principals and other impacted school staff to have regular check-ins with partners to ensure everyone is aware of what is working and what needs to be improved. Partners and schools (and the District) are a team and partners should not be seen as a threat to District and/or school personnel.
- Create an environment, at all schools, where students can confidentially engage with partners and have autonomy when seeking support.

Build New Community Partnerships
- Build strategic partnerships with other systems (housing, justice, health care and mental health systems) that are responsible for child and family well-being. This includes housing, justice, health care and mental health systems.
- Establish partnerships with grassroots organization who are familiar to students and families and are culturally competent.

Deepen Policy Advocacy Efforts (Pillar I)
- Work with community partners across the region to point out to regional and state decision-makers the inequitable policies that SLPS is forced to operate within and their harmful impacts. Engage community partners in policy advocacy.

Intensify Community Fundraising (Pillar I and V)
- Leverage partnerships by soliciting in-kind donations to cover resources needed for the District and/or school, i.e., books and technology to increase at home learning.

Note: The partners' roundtable feedback differed slightly from the community visioning responses (Pillar V, page 22 of the CV report), in that the partners provided more detail on the required elements of a more robust and responsive partnership program.

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.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	
2016-2019 Years of Academic, Attendance, Graduation, College & Career Data	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ If the District is using academic performance, it must look at the external factors (i.e., homelessness or parents' education) that could decrease or increase student performance. ▪ Performance seems to blame the student for his/her inability to achieve. Plus, external factors must be considered.
▪ In what ways does the District's magnet school model influence student performance?	

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*
▪ No comment.	▪ No comment.
Partners can be employed to repurpose buildings.	

FEEDER PATTERNS	
Analysis Of Pathways For Transitioning Students From Elementary School To Middle School & From Middle School To High School	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ No comment.

CITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT	
Data Collected From The City Planning Department	
Criterion Agreement	*Criterion Disagreement*
▪ No comment.	▪ No comment.

- ▪ The District needs to work with the City to determine the potential revenue generated from economic development.
- ▪ The District can repair or redefine what the community looks like beyond the development with renovating or constructing a new school.

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, community partners suggested four other factors that they want the district to consider in its school assessment process. All four factors below were voiced during the community visioning workshops.

Racial and Social Equity
- ▪ The existing criteria reinforce inequity by privileging schools that are successful under today's conditions. The District should apply the Ferguson Commission's racial equity lens to its decision-making and evaluation.
- ▪ If a student is transferred to a school where more students have more economic resources, this should be considered because the student's self-esteem could be impacted.

Student, Family, Staff and Community Impact
- ▪ The District must consider the closure impact on students and families. A school represents a sense of community to many students and their families and this may negatively impact a child's ability to focus and learn. The District must be certain that a student's reassignment will provide a more conducive learning environment with a supportive team.
- ▪ The District should discuss how a school closure will impact a family's routine; and the District should be address these concerns with proactive solutions rather than being reactive.
- ▪ How will staff be supported during the closure?

Historical Significance
- ▪ The historical significance of a school must be considered in the closure decision. Schools like Sumner have cultural and historical value.
- ▪ Make sure that if a school like Sumner is closed, the building is utilized for something. DO NOT ERASE BLACK HISTORY!
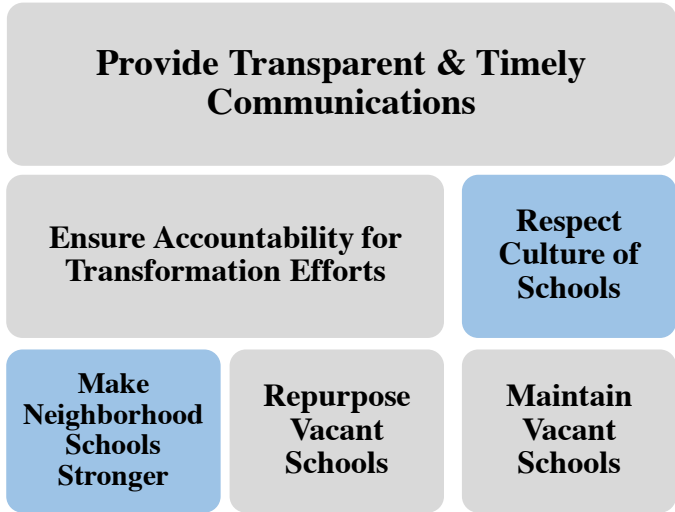
Transportation Time and Cost
- ▪ Consider returning students to neighborhood schools that are within walking distance to their homes.
- ▪ Assess ways to reduce the overall transportation cost with consolidation.

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 made 7 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		**Respect Culture of Schools**
Make Neighborhood Schools Stronger	**Repurpose Vacant Schools**	**Maintain Vacant Schools**

Provide Transparent & Timely Communications

- Develop a detailed transition plan for closing and consolidating schools and share the plan with staff, students, families and community partners.
- Ensure there is a strategic plan and vision that is communicated early and often to community stakeholders. This strategic plan should layout a structured and phased closure process that preserves culture and lessens the negative impacts. Rising high school freshman should not be sent to a school that is closing the following year.
- Explain the decision-making process to cultivate understanding and community buy-in. Articulate how the community visioning process helped to inform the closure decision.
- Include funders (St. Louis Mental Health Board) in decision process to understand the impact of closures on community partners. The goal is to ensure no partnership is adversely impacted by the closure.

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.
- Clarify the District's priorities and explain how the closure decision will keep SLPS from needing to take such drastic measures in three to five years.
- When closing a school and transferring students, identify the school's partners and if possible, ensure families have the same support in the new location. Overcompensate with more resources to schools receiving new students.

Respect Culture of Schools

- Be intentional about integrating the cultures of different schools that are having to consolidate.
- A structured and phased closure process allows impacted students, staff and partners an opportunity to prepare for and adjust to the associated changes.

Make Neighborhood Schools Stronger
- Many students have left neighborhood schools because the perception is that a magnet school is more impactful. By making them stronger, more students and families would not have to select between choice, convenience and community.

Repurpose Vacant Schools
- Identify community wants and when possible, repurpose the building and/or the grounds. Some schools can still serve as a familiar community space

Maintain Vacant Schools

- A vacant and dilapidated school is an eyesore in an already blighted neighborhood. The District should not contribute to the blight, but allocate money to maintain the building and the surrounding grounds.

V. Conclusion

The findings in this report seek to accurately convey partners' unique sentiments communicated at St. Louis Public Schools' community visioning roundtables. These roundtables provided partners an opportunity to weigh in on SLPS transformation efforts, with specific foci on creating a system of excellent schools and redirecting district resources while improving the District's partnership program. 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 Partner Roundtable
Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Rebeccah Bennett

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	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
▪ High potential / Improving (5) ➔ Hopeful ➔ Promising ➔ Progress ▪ Struggling / Fractured (3) ➔ Fragmented ▪ Under-resourced ▪ Bureaucratic ▪ Abandoned buildings ▪ Underutilized ▪ Disinvestment ▪ Tough road ▪ Mixed bag ▪ Disorganized ▪ Too big ▪ Hidden gems ▪ Community focused	▪ Low enrollment	▪ Dedicated, but overworked faculty (2) ➔ Caring and committed educators ▪ Concerned ▪ Different

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

Faculty & Staff ▪ Competitive compensation and benefits for teachers and staff ▪ Increased professional development for teachers so that they are properly equipped to innovate and be learner focused	***Increased Student Support Services & Resources*** ▪ More support services in schools to help students and staff be ready to learn joyfully, in safe environments ▪ Trauma-informed care is the norm
Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion ▪ Equity at the center – policies, practices and programs do not continue to disadvantage people of color in the system ▪ Equitable opportunities for all students ▪ Elimination of disparate policies and practices that place the District at a disadvantage, like the $6M fee that SLPS has to pay to the Special School District	***Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships*** ▪ Families feel like they belong and are supported
	Community Engagement & Partnerships ▪ Closer alignment between the District and the business community around talent / workforce development. More business involvement in the development of curricula and skills training. More innovative public / private partnerships around workforce development
Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences ▪ Learner focused, providing a diversity of opportunities ▪ Students have more educational choices, more electives ▪ SLPS is the testing ground for new ideas and approaches to learning. The District is driving the educational conversation and not being reactive in its transformation efforts	***Miscellaneous*** ▪ Unity – the community, families and schools work together for the benefit of students ▪ Fiscal responsibility – Resources are well placed, well spent and learner focused

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

Priorities	Changes within the Priority
Priority 1: Community Engagement	▪ Continue to have open conversations with the community, like this roundtable. ▪ Engage community partners to be part of the District's strategic planning process and to execute on critical pieces of the plan so that SLPS may better reach its goals.
Priority 2: Strengthened Community Partnerships	▪ Build strategic partnerships with other systems that are responsible for child and family well-being. This includes housing, justice, health care and mental health systems. ▪ Make the MOU process and formalization of partnerships easier. This process is extremely challenging to service providers. Many do not feel valued and welcomed by the District or its schools. It is easier to provide services in charter and private school settings than it is to support SLPS. ▪ Ensure a clearer understanding of and alignment around the resources that students, staff and schools need. Staff are so stressed that it is often difficult for them to specify and communicate what is most needed and beneficial. ▪ Provide more centralized information, communication and coordination about the resources and services that the District's non-profit partners offer. This will help schools engage in needs analyses; reduce service duplications; and obtain faster access to critical services. ▪ Offer more clear and consistent communication about the District's policies and procedures. Also, make sure that external partners know who to contact and turn to regarding policies and issues.
Priority 3: Staff Mental Health	▪ Offer more staff mental health supports.
Priority 4: Policy Advocacy	▪ Work with community partners across the region to point out to regional and state decision-makers the inequitable policies that SLPS is forced to operate within and their harmful impacts. Engage community partners in policy advocacy.

Note: Priorities are NOT presented in order of importance.

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 Factors – General Critique (Need for a racial equity lens)**	▪ *The existing criteria reinforce inequity by privileging schools that are successful under today's conditions. The District should apply the Ferguson Commission's racial equity lens to its decision-making and evaluation.*
▪ **Existing Factors – Academic Performance**	▪ *Look at environmental data / factors that may increase or decrease student performance.*
▪ Student Impacts	▪ *What will be the impacts of closures on students and their learning? Closures will lead to a loss of community.* ▪ *What happens to students who cannot get into magnet schools? What is the quality of their educations?*
▪ Historical Significance	▪ *Consider the historical significance of schools when making closure decisions. Schools like Sumner have cultural and historical value.* ▪ *Make sure that if a school like Sumner is shut down, the building is utilized for something. DO NOT ERASE BLACK HISTORY!*

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

▪ **Ensure Accountability for Transformation Efforts:** Communicate what the cost savings is going to be from closing and consolidating schools. Let the public know how the District will use these funds and what the change in outcomes will be from the District's efforts. Make clear to all stakeholders the District's priorities and how today's closure decisions will keep SLPS from needing to take such drastic measures 3 to 5 years from now. This painful decision should be a critical turning point for the system's function and health. The community should not have to come back to square one later.	▪ **Repurpose School Buildings:** Ensure that vacated buildings are used to meet other community needs, especially needs that help SLPS students and families (like housing).
▪ **Establish & Communicate A Transition Plan:** Develop a detailed transition plan for closing and consolidating schools. Share this plan with staff, students, families and community partners	▪ **Respect Different School Cultures:** Be intentional about integrating the cultures of different schools that are having to consolidate.
▪ **Make Neighborhood Schools Stronger / More Competitive:** Make neighborhood schools more desirable and impactful. More students and families would choose them and therefore not have to select between choice, convenience and community.	▪ **Maintain Vacant Schools:** Set money aside to keep empty schools in good condition.
▪ **Undertake Structured / Phased Closures:** Structured and phased closures help to preserve culture and lessen negative impacts. For example, do not accept any more freshmen in a high school that is eventually being closed.	▪ **Clearly Identify the District's Points of Contact:** Determine who the District's spokespeople are that will be communicating changes. Make sure that these people are easily accessible and supported in their duties. They must disseminate information to families and community partners quickly and frequently.

St. Louis Public School District
Community Visioning Process
Community Visioning Roundtable
Community Partners – Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Lorren Buck

<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	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
- Scattered - challenged - Slowing improving - Stagnant - Lacking - Unsupported - Preserving - Dysfunctional - Struggling (3) - Triage	- Low enrollment - Growing	- Dedicated, but overworked faculty (2) ➔ Caring and committed educators - Concerned - Different - Resilient - Potential (2) - Powerful - Hopeful (2) - Unproductive - Deserve full support

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

Faculty & Staff - Values and prioritizes physical/social wellness of staff and students as much as academics - Overabundance of teachers – high demand working environment	***Increased Student Support Services & Resources*** - Trauma informed practices which are actionable and accountable - Enriching lives beyond neighborhood limits
Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - Diversity and inclusion of thoughts, people, resources and pedagogy - Progressive teaching methods and culturally relevant curriculum - Elimination of punitive practices to strengthen relationships and curtain unhealthy behaviors: enhance, empower and heal - A culture of safety, support and respect in each building – joyful and hopeful	***Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships*** - Two generational approach: opportunities for students and families – bring both on the journey - Respect, trust and support from parents
Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences - Multitude of programs: mentorships, extracurricular and study groups - Emphasis on literacy and STEM	***System Performance / Educational Outcomes*** - Integrated and reinforcing rather than isolated and fragmented - Effective communication and administration - Pathways for professional development for teachers at every level of employment - Pipeline and level of support for principals (mentorship)
Stronger Community Connections & Engagement - Consistent partnerships across district buildings - Neighborhood anchor which promotes pride - Community school model: medical, therapeutic, counseling, GED and employment	

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: Teacher & Staff Capacity, Development & Resourcing	▪ Resources that are not given to some students and denied to others
Priority 2: Increased Financing	▪ Shared revenue through district partnerships ▪ Solicit in kinds donations from partners to cover resources needed from district i.e. books, technology to increase at home learning (leverage engagement)
Priority 3: Family Support Services	▪ Wrap around, culturally competent model – assessing what is needed and who can provide it ▪ Environment where students can engage with partners confidentially with partners and have autonomy when seeking support for their wellbeing
Priority 4: Enhanced Curricula	▪ Cross collaboration and impact to reduce duplication among multiple partnerships ▪ Identify appropriate partners by gauging priority of partners to insure alignment; build on previous efforts (i.e. United Way report)
Priority 5: Community Involvement	▪ Consistent meeting with existing partners to discover what is going well ▪ Mandated training of partners; cross training between districts partners to utilize more services ▪ Cohesive and improved relationships between partners: community partners shouldn't be seen as a threat to district staff ▪ Establish partnerships with grassroots organization who are familiar to students and families and culturally competent
Priority 6: Stronger Academic Preparation	▪ Data and outcomes aligned to better understand performance
Priority 7: Operations and Performance	▪ Well defined structure and navigational instructions/tools ▪ Informed and highly communicative ▪ Follow through on materials needed in partnerships which are agreed upon by the district ▪ Clear, consistent communication – appropriate response time ▪ Full transparency: information given to principals should be shared with partners ▪ Streamlined and improved MOU process that doesn't change annually ▪ Proactive approach: plan of engagement verses reactionary when partners arrive

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:** Feeder Patterns	▪
▪ **Existing Factor:** City-Wide Economic Development	▪ What will be the revenue stream from economic development? ▪ Repair/redefine what community looks like beyond just economic investment.
▪ **Existing Factor:** Performance	▪ Performance consideration seems to blame students (measures should put in place so gap doesn't continue to exist) ▪ Address magnet model where students don't attend the school in their neighborhood
▪ **Existing Factor:** Building Age & Condition	▪ Repurpose buildings. Partners can be employed
▪ **Existing Factor:** All Factors	▪ Impact upon students/families if their existing culture of community is disrupted. The dynamics which may interfere with integration i.e. those living in housing complexes vs single homes ▪ Are existing alternatives realistic? ▪ The district runs the risk of staff leaving. How will staff be supported? ▪ High level conversations between charter and SLPS
▪ Transportation	▪ What will be the added to transportation cost? ▪ Work to put kids back into neighborhood schools within walking distance to home when possible
▪ Social Equity	▪ Marginalization of North city community and schools. Shame should not be put on families ▪ ask families how this will impact their routine so that they are not disempowered. This decision was not their choice, what agency do they have?

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

▪ **Provide Timely Communication:** timely communication with agencies, staff and families. Transparency: articulate why the decision was made for better understanding and alignment. It reduces confusion and misunderstanding is eliminated. Include funders (St. Louis Mental Health Board) in decision process to recognize impact on community partners	▪ **Repurpose Vacant Buildings:** plan for building and grounds. Align community led planning process. What do community members want for their neighborhood?
▪ **Maximize Student Options:** take and account of what partners are currently in schools which may close. Ensure families have same support in new school. Ensure partnerships will not be adversely affected. Overcompensate with more resources and money to schools which will have an increase of new students	▪