

**St. Louis Public Schools
Community Visioning Process
Principals' Roundtable
Meeting Summary – March 12, 2020**



I. Overview

One-hundred and six St. Louis Public Schools' principals and assistant principals met on Thursday, March 12, 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 insights from school leaders 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

School leaders were divided into five 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 school leadership roundtable small group discussion are catalogued in this report's appendices.

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 principals’ responses were the same as those captured at the community visioning workshops. Blue text indicates responses specific to the principals’ roundtable.

PILLAR I & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT CREATES A SYSTEM OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student Attendance & Enrollment ■ Safe & Secure Schools ■ Financial Sustainability ■ Efficient & Equitable Staffing 	
COMMUNITY VISION	
<p><i>Schools are emotionally, mentally, and physically safe.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All staff have been trained to be culturally responsive / competent. ▪ Students and teachers are comfortable coming to school and there is no tolerance for anyone making people feel unwelcome or unsafe at school. ▪ <i>Strong retention at all levels (District administrators, school leadership, teachers and support personnel.)</i> ▪ Schools are safe, welcoming, clean and well-maintained. ▪ Children are fed nutritious and healthy meals and they care about their physical health. 	<p><i>The District is fully funded and resources are fully utilized.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The District is fully staffed. ▪ The District has money and resources to provide all necessary services. ▪ Buildings are fully functional (<i>fully functioning systems, restrooms and water fountains</i>), clean and ADA compliant. ▪ <i>Maintenance staff is appropriate for District size, building condition and they have needed resources to maintain schools and grounds.</i> ▪ Add cameras and door alarms to elementary schools (for building safety and to know if students depart.) ▪ <i>Where appropriate, all schools have dedicated art studios, science labs and Maker spaces.</i>
<p><i>Data Drives Decision-Making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are used to drive decision-making regarding academic programming, trauma-informed practices, healthy start times, busing choices, and curricula. ▪ District and schools are proactive planners making data-based decisions collaboratively. ▪ <i>School leadership is actively involved in decision-making and held accountable for their results.</i> 	

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PILLAR II & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: THE DISTRICT ADVANCES FAIRNESS AND EQUITY ACROSS ITS SYSTEM	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workforce Diversity ■ Equitable Resource Distribution ■ Trauma-Informed Classrooms 	
COMMUNITY VISION	
<p><i>All students have equitable access to high quality instruction and programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All schools are resourced equitably. They do not have to be magnet schools to get the best resources. ■ Staff is equitably aligned; the best teachers aren't only at the best performing schools. 	<p><i>Mental wellness is a priority.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teachers and teaching assistants are trauma informed. ■ Psychological and mental health supports are available to all students.
<p><i>Curricula are equitable and culturally relevant</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Career Pathways ■ Teacher Retention ■ Culturally Responsive Schools 	
COMMUNITY VISION	
<p><i>Educators are highly qualified and invested.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All teachers are highly educated and certified. ■ Teachers and principals are invested, caring, and willing to go the extra mile. ■ Servant leaders (principals, teachers and support staff) who are willing to stand in solidarity to provide a student-centered approach to learning. ■ Staff are afforded intentional and high quality professional development and opportunities. 	<p><i>Staff are well supported and empowered.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teachers are provided competitive compensation and benefits. ■ Staff (teachers and principals) are supported and valued by the District and provided flexibility in decision-making, school and classroom structure. ■ Teachers are treated as partners in the learning process and their efforts are respected by leadership, students and parents.
<p><i>Excellence is the standard expectation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High academic achievement. ■ Students and teachers push past challenges and exhibit greater resilience. 	<p><i>Classes are structured to promote learning</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classes have low student-to-teacher ratios (under the state guidelines). 2. Classrooms are updated with the latest technology and the most optimal infrastructure for the technology.

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PILLAR IV & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: ALL STUDENTS LEARN TO READ AND SUCCEED	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student Reading Proficiency ■ College & Career Readiness ■ English Language Learner Success 	
COMMUNITY VISION	
<p><i>Curricula are focused on preparing students for post high school.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Curricula prepare students for participation in the trades and for non-college careers. ■ Curricula align with students' capabilities to ensure each student is prepared for the next grade. ■ Soft skills are cultivated by placing less focus on benchmarks and state and District assessments. ■ Programs teach entrepreneurship and economic / financial education. (3) ■ There are more multi-lingual opportunities. ■ STEAM/STEM pathways must be included to prepare our students with 21st century skills. ■ There is no IEP for SPED students because all students have an individual learning and education plan. ■ All students are happy, engaged and challenged, regardless of grade level and ability. 	<p><i>Math, ELA, and Reading Proficiency are a focus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Curricula in Math and ELA are rigorous. ■ Phonics prioritized at the elementary level. ■ No "one size fits all" reading programs; allow teachers to choose. ■ Each school has a FT librarian.

PILLAR V & CORRESPONDING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES SUPPORT THE DISTRICT'S TRANSFORMATION PLAN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Volunteer & Mentor Engagement ■ Community & District Pride ■ Community Partner Investment 	
COMMUNITY VISION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Note: Very minimal reference and discussion about partnerships and community support. Two of five small groups mentioned the term, but only referred to having "active" partnerships. No mention of how partnerships would contribute to a system of excellent schools. 	

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.



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ADDITIONAL PILLAR & CORRESPONDING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES – EX. PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ex. Parental Involvement in Learning ■ Ex. Parental Supports & Services 	
<p><i>Parents are more actively engaged with and supportive of schools.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy relationship between students, parents and staff. ▪ Parents support schools and participate in decision-making around how schools are operated. 	<p><i>Parents are supported by schools.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Families are provided additional supports (wellness, groceries, education, housing) by advocates and community specialists.

ADDITIONAL PILLAR & CORRESPONDING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES – DISTRICT LEADERSHIP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effective Leadership ■ Qualified Administrators 	
<p><i>Leadership is high quality throughout the District</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership development opportunities are available to all principals and should include multi-year mentoring, on-going feedback and advanced training. 	<p><i>Leadership is qualified and visionary</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership is innovative, visionary, forward thinking and proactive. ▪ Principals are empowered to take risks. ▪ There is trust and synergy among administrators and principals and among principals and teachers.
<p><i>Leadership is accountable.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders honor their commitments and follow through on their promises. ▪ Leaders are accountable to the community for student outcomes. 	

**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.

- Every student has access to iPads, tablets, or computers and internet service.
- Students and families are provided full services and supports. Ex. Jennings School District has laundry facilities and groceries for families.
- Schools are fully resourced with enough chairs, desks, books, and materials.

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 (behavioral support staff, counselors, nurses, coaches).

QUESTION 3: To achieve a system of excellence, what must be the District’s top priorities and changes?

Participants’ Top Priorities

Having developed their visions for a system of excellent schools, school leaders were asked to consider where SLPS should focus its transformation efforts to yield the greatest positive impacts. In response to this question, they generated **twelve** priorities, which fell within all the District’s five pillars. These priorities, which are presented with supporting statements that clarify the changes school leaders want the district to make, are captured to the right. The priorities mentioned by two or more small groups are detailed in the image. All priorities were also mentioned during the community visioning workshops.



Pillar I

Evaluate and Improve Transportation

1. Assess contracting bus service compared to bus ownership; if some schools are closed and the District moves towards more neighborhood schools, it may find it more cost effective to own.
2. Hold bus company accountable. Students often wait for a bus which never comes. No communication is given and students are penalized for absence at school. Parents are waiting for busses which don’t come. It is a safety issue specifically during cold weather. Technology is needed to track buses (like Uber app).
 - Invest in smaller shuttle buses; this is especially useful if high school students need to travel to other schools for specific classes.
 - Extend student transportation miles, so students have access to more schools.

Deepen Political and Policy Advocacy Efforts

- Agitate board and mayor to be a vocal SLPS advocate for SLPS (deescalate competition with charter schools – perception that resources are taken from SLPS and given to charter schools).
- Assemble liaison and political education committee to champion SLPS with DESE.

Plan Collaboratively and Proactively; and Communicate with Transparency

- Adopt a proactive approach to problem solving.
- Minimize isolated thinking (silos) and competition among schools.
- Plan ahead of time for changes and decisions.
 - Don’t rush decisions to roll out new initiatives or large changes without providing appropriate time to learn, plan, gather resources, etc.
 - First conduct research, consider relevant stakeholders, and the impact on the population served prior to making decisions.
 - Ensure that new curricula or initiatives are appropriate for the SLPS population (as opposed to it working with another district that is extremely different).
- [Change the negative narrative the community has about SLPS by focusing on how we market by creating the SLPS brand. The District is more than the basics \(reading and literacy\).](#)
- Clearly communicate SLPS’s mission, vision and goals to entire District, municipal organizations and community groups, so they understand SLPS’s direction.

Increase Available Funding

- Focus on funding to innovate rather than just sustain.
- Seek additional funding opportunities, such as: Increase grant writing, working with foundations, and community partnerships.

Pillar II

Distribute Enrollment, Funding and Resources Equitably Across Schools

- 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.
- [Ensure equitable enrollment across schools; and cease prioritizing District staff over general public.](#)
- Cease inconsistency with enrollment policies from school-to-school, especially in PK.
- Look beyond performance scores into the whys behind the scores.
 - Why is performance low for some students? Could it be that they had a substitute teacher for 3 years in a row? Could it be they are exposed to trauma and have daily safety concerns? Could it be that building problems are taking away from educational opportunities and instruction time?
- Evaluate all teachers fairly and equitably because some teachers are evaluated in areas, that others are not.

Pillar III

Improve Workforce Quality, Relationships, Morale and Retention

- Revamp SLPS's system of supporting first year teachers (and principals) with ongoing mentorship and feedback.
- Provide more opportunities for teachers (within grade levels, but also across buildings) to collaborate and learn from each other.
- Increase compensation and benefits to a competitive level; [consider replacing step salary to draw more qualified teachers; honor teachers with experience.](#)
- Be more transparent (to teachers and the public) with salary scale.
- Incentivize teachers working in high need schools.
- Provide more robust mental health and wellness supports for teachers and staff. Both groups are getting burned out and absorb trauma in their jobs. Many are also working two and three jobs to make ends meet.

Ensure Student Placement and Quality at Alternative Schools

- [Ensure alternative schools are actually providing alternative education, not just focused on disciplinary measures.](#)
- [Ensure there are enough alternative school spots for those who need placement there.](#)

Pillar IV

Be More Student-Centered

- Give teachers and principals more autonomy and latitude with managing classrooms and schools. Empower them to center students' needs in their instruction and school climate efforts.
- Increase opportunities for experiential learning either in school or through partnerships (e.g., Farm-to-Table curriculum).
- Assess alternatives to testing, such as project based learning.
- Provide Montessori training for all faculty.
- Reduce the student to teacher ratio, so more time can be spent with each student.
- Initiate college and career readiness in middle school; help students identify interests and develop pathways towards career interests.
- Give students (middle school and high school) more of a voice in developing the District's direction. Involve them in change efforts. They are the end user.
- Provide teaching assistants beyond PK, so that teachers can differentiate instruction. Teachers have students at multiple levels and need to be able to focus on one group at a time to provide instruction to their level. They need someone else in the classroom to help with this.
- Focus on how to provide differentiated instruction rather than expecting teachers to be able to teach a group of students at varying levels with no additional help or assistance or support.

- Provide opportunities for students to learn and explore rather than only focusing on test scores.
- Increase investment for in-school programming (e.g., teen outreach, robotics program, culinary program, Springboard to Learning).
- [Develop a more rigorous and structured summer school program. It currently exists as a babysitting service.](#)
- Delay start times for middle and high school students.

Strengthen Family and Parent Support (IV Expansion)

- Ensure each school has a FT social worker and nurse to help address the underlying challenges that students are experiencing at home, including economic instability, mental health challenges.
- Develop and source trauma responsible teams in each school (Note: while teachers are trained, they are unable to fully address student’s needs).
- [Examine and evaluate the need for therapeutic schools \(for tier 3 students\) in the District, especially with most schools lacking appropriate resources to support children of trauma.](#)
- Provide in-school comprehensive services to families, such as laundry accessibility, food pantry and health clinics).

Pillar V

Expand Partnership and Community Support

- Help people understand the value of investing in public education and how they can support the District as volunteers or Foundation donors.
- Conduct intentional community outreach in ways that are responsive to, not defensive or imposing on the community.

Additional Priorities

Maintain Facilities and Grounds Regularly and Consistently

- Invest in facilities and ensure they are clean and aesthetically pleasing.
- Perform routine facility checks.
- Retrofit or replace water fountains to accommodate water bottles.
- Improve school’s curb appeal.

Improve School Safety and Security

- Place security cameras inside and outside of schools.
- [Site a safety officer at every school, including elementary.](#)
- Allow for and consistently administer appropriate disciplinary consequences for all students from PK to 12 grade.
- [Stop allowing anyone to walk into elementary schools, especially PK to 2.](#)

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 principals’ roundtable.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	
2016-2019 Years of Academic, Attendance, Graduation, College & Career Data	
<i>Criterion Agreement</i>	<i>Criterion Disagreement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No comment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School performance should not be included because some schools have higher academic performance because their students are selected ▪ Academic achievement is rooted in poverty. It shouldn’t be a consideration. Low performing students are put in specific buildings and kept out of others ▪ This the least important factor for principals because there are so many factors to consider with performance besides academic achievement. ▪ If students in a low performing school aren’t receiving all the needed resources, they are being penalized exponentially – 1) low income family with possible trauma; 2) limited school resources to address the trauma; and 3) school closure, which increases student trauma ▪ Homelessness influences academic performance. Therefore, if academic performance is included, SLPS must consider the number of homeless students ▪ Academic achievement is rooted in poverty. It shouldn’t be a consideration. Low performing students are put in specific buildings and kept out of others ▪ There are so many variables that influence academic performance; if used, SLPS must be willing to consider the why behind test scores.

CAPACITY	
Maximum Building Capacity Divided By Its Average 3-Year Enrollment	
<i>Criterion Agreement</i>	<i>Criterion Disagreement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity should be included – an overcapacity school is unsafe and an under capacity school wastes resources. ▪ Some schools are using space for support services; will this be considered when determining capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be more flexible or lenient with under capacity schools in North City because 1) disinvestment has influenced school capacity; and 2) closing a North City school reduces the sense of community. ▪ Capacity needs to be defined based on evidence-based research and student need. What is the best capacity for students needing additional resources due to trauma, poverty, etc.? ▪ Spaces need to be learning appropriate, not just based on old numbers.

BUILDING CONDITION	
Facility Capital Action Plan (FCAP) Outlines Age, Condition, Deferred Maintenance & Capital Improvement Projects & Categorizes Projects By Building, System & Priority	
<i>Criterion Agreement</i>	<i>Criterion Disagreement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, this should be considered. SLPS also needs to evaluate buildings to determine if they can be repurposed. ▪ Building age/condition should not be ignored. ▪ Should be considered and SLPS should also look at the school's ability to meet the full needs (academic, social, emotional, etc.) of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Important for curb appeal and pride. Financially in terms of resourcing other areas, what happens once they close? Does the financial burden cease? What happens with the vacant building?
<p>Additional Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The District must take responsibility for maintaining the buildings poorly and allowing them to be in disrepair. ▪ Communicate the ranking and rationale to staff. Be transparent. ▪ Would a well performing magnet school in a poorly maintained school be closed? (Double standard) 	

FEEDER PATTERNS	
Analysis Of Pathways For Transitioning Students From Elementary School To Middle School & From Middle School To High School	
<i>Criterion Agreement</i>	<i>Criterion Disagreement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No comment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeder patterns no longer exist in SLPS' system of choice. The ability to choose has eliminated feeder patterns and the District should consider returning to neighborhood elementary and middle school feeder patterns. Re-establish feeder patterns and invest heavily in those schools. ▪ Feeder patterns are not organic, and half are used with SLPS being a district of choice. ▪ Is there a correlation between feeder patterns and building age? Current feeder schools already have outstanding building and facility needs that are not being addressed. ▪ Additional students may leave the district if you close their schools. District should consider how close the shuttered school is to a charter school.
<p>Additional Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will families have a choice about what school to attend if their school is closed? If so, how will this affect feeder patterns? 	

CITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT	
Data Collected From The City Planning Department	
<i>Criterion Agreement</i>	<i>Criterion Disagreement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No comment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No Comment.
<p>Additional Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The City has not considered or taken responsibility for the negative impacts of TIFs and tax abatements on the local school system and St. Louis' children. There needs to be greater political accountability. ▪ Development efforts have caused people to leave the City of St. Louis; and if a school is being retained because of future development, SLPS must consider how the neighborhood may change over the years. ▪ Consider a school being the catalyst for neighborhood renewal. ▪ When presenting the schools slated for closure, communicate where economic development is targeted. 	

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, principals suggested six other factors that they want the district to consider in its school assessment process. Four factors (in black text) were voiced during the community visioning workshops. The two remaining factors (in blue text) were not.

Neighborhood or Community Impact

- School mergers and closures will have an impact on the surrounding residential areas. A closed school will negatively impact an already blighted areas. Also, if a community program is housed in the building, services may be severed.

Transportation Time and Cost

- Establish a maximum travel time for elementary, middle and high school students; if possible limit travel time to ≤ 30 to 35 minutes.

Staff and Student Placement & Morale

- Consider the impact on the individuals (students, teachers and principals) from a humanistic approach rather than numbers. Ensure that a trained professional is there to work with both students and teachers because it is traumatic to have your school closed.
- During the transition, the District must consider how principals will work together to ensure a smooth transition.
- Consider the opportunities available for incoming students. These should be similar or better than opportunities at current schools.

Distance and Location of SLPS Magnet and Charter Schools

- Magnet schools draw students from throughout the District; and if a charter school is close by, when a District school closes, students may attend that school. How can the District retain the most number of students after schools are closed and consolidated?

Concentration of Homeless Students

- SLPS needs to assess where these students are living and attempt to reduce the transportation time for them.
- These children are already living a traumatic life, and it is likely a school closure will impact them even more. How will SLPS lessen the impact for these students, as they represent 40% of our student body and likely attend one of the schools slated for closure.

Closure Announcement Timing

- Choose options that will result in less time of students, teachers, families being left in limbo. Of course, there is never an ideal time, but the District should consider anything happening culturally, regionally, nationally. - Don't disrupt communities that are already being disrupted.

QUESTION 5: What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on District stakeholders and communities?

Recommendations for Mitigating Adverse Impacts

As shown on the right, roundtable participants suggested 6 recommendations for lessening the negative impacts of school closures. All recommendations are in gray boxes, which indicates all recommendations were also voiced mostly frequently at the community visioning sessions.

Provide Transparent & Timely Communications

- Communicate with families, students and staff early and often. Ensure they understand why the closure is occurring, how the decision was made and what to expect when (timeline), explain the selection process and how schools were prioritized.
- Notify staff early, if they will be unemployed or changing to another location.
- Release short and long term plans of what will be carried out by the district and what action items each of these 3 stakeholder groups should take in prep for the transition
- Create a hotline to answer questions.
- Conduct in-school presentations, at convenient times, in addition to the public meetings.

Provide Transparent & Timely Communications

Maximize Family and Student Options

Minimize Impact and Maintain Consistency

Plan for Transition

Introduce Families & Students to New School

Create a Plan for Shuttered and Receiving Schools

Maximize Family and Student Options

- Be clear about available school options and provide information about schools so parents/families can make informed choices
- Allow families to choose the receiving school they desire. The options provided must be comparable and consider the student/family's needs. Consider proximity to home and student/family's preferences
- Give parents and students multiple options to increase the chances that the students will stay in the district and get the best educational fit.
- Revise the criteria for magnet schools to allow more students to have choice.

Minimize Impact and Maintain Consistency

- Minimize the shifts that are happening with students and staff, perhaps employ a cohort process where consistency can be maintained between students and staff together, as well as peers (principals with teachers of their choice, students with friends).
- Gauge interest of staff to stay or leave as a way to minimize impact. Less layoffs, if some where planning to leave anyway
- Offer staff choice in their next placement.
- Provide additional professional development support for additional certifications, provisions, etc. to incentivize teachers to stay.
- Create new positions, as needed, for staff that would otherwise be terminated. This helps improve the efficiency of systems as mentioned earlier.

Plan for Transition

- Instead of closing School A and having students join School B, redevelop the school so that students from School A & B will be developing a new school. Ensure the new school is completely different – new name, colors, mascot, etc. – even if in one of the old buildings. The students and staff can create the new identity together as a way to bond.
- This is extremely rushed for a decision for the 2020-2021 school year. Should be delayed until 2021-2022, so that everyone is prepared.
- ALL impacted parties (principals, teachers, support staff, students and families) need a well-thought out and thorough plan.
- School leadership and newly transferred teachers need to have an opportunity to bond and to develop working relationships. Schools should welcome new teachers, not shun them.
- Teachers and support staff should have time to learn about new students. It could be helpful if the prior grade teacher could share information about the student (this is likely info that isn't included in the student's file). Have schools assign a shadow buddy, if possible.
- Ensure schools are fully staffed to receive new populations.

Introduce Students and Families to New School

- Host a welcome event for incoming students and provide transportation for the family and sibling childcare, if needed; conduct any needs assessments before school starts; receiving teacher (and social worker) needs to meet with the family to truly understand their needs (or barriers to school attendance).
- Offer summer school, tours, meet and greets, and so forth for students who will be moving to new schools. Seamless transition for enrollment process and transportation, and assist families with transition, i.e. providing uniforms and other essentials needed.

Plan for Shuttered and Receiving Schools

- Ensure there is a plan for buildings that will no longer house schools by repurposing, selling or maintaining them. Do not contribute to an already blighted area.
- SLPS should ensure the receiving school is attractive and welcoming to new students. Students shouldn't be transferred from a "poor" to a "fair" school.

V. Conclusion

The findings in this report seek to accurately convey the unique sentiments of SLPS' school leadership. The roundtables provided school leadership 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 Roundtable
 Principals – Thursday, March 12, 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	OUTCOMES	PEOPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainability ▪ Logistical nightmare ▪ Broken (2) ▪ Historical ▪ Antiquated (2) ▪ Disjointed ▪ Without Strategy ▪ Challenged ▪ Fractured ▪ Disorganized ▪ Stagnant ▪ Inequitable ▪ Urban Challenge ▪ Great organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High expectations ▪ Evolving ▪ Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guarantee jobs ▪ Overwhelmed ▪ In need ▪ Resilient (2) ▪ Confused (2) ▪ Unsafe ▪ Uncertainty

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

<p>Faculty & Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly qualified and certified master teachers (experts in their fields) who are compensated competitively ▪ Teachers dedicated and committed to each student in their classes; and able to differentiate abilities and engage students effectively ▪ Servant leaders standing in solidarity to provide a student centered experience for all ▪ Culturally competent and trauma-informed teachers and teachers’ assistants who understand their students’ backgrounds, are aware of their needs and know how to respond ▪ Teachers are treated as partners in the learning process and their efforts are respected by leadership, students and parents ▪ Leadership development opportunities are available to all principals and should include multi-year mentoring, on-going feedback, and advanced training 	<p>Student Performance / Educational Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a variety of student opportunities (mentors, tutors, field trips, enrichment and remedial classes) ▪ Promotes and delivers equitable outcomes ▪ Aligns curriculum with students’ capabilities to ensure each student is prepared for the next grade
	<p>Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students and teachers push past challenges and exhibit greater resilience ▪ Every student has access to computer and internet technology ▪ More customized and interactive instruction to challenge students and meet their different learning styles and needs
<p>Increased Student Support Services & Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student centered approach addressing the student’s needs with intentional support, regardless of his or her capabilities. ▪ Fully staffed student support services (FT college counselors (MS and HS only), social workers and nurses) at all schools 	<p>Equitable Distribution of Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every student receives the resources needed, regardless of where the live or attend school ▪ There is no IEP needed for special education students because <u>all</u> students have an individual education plan ▪ Staffing is equitably aligned; the best teachers aren’t only at the best performing schools

System and School Environment

1. Transparent and honest; acknowledges a break in the system and solicits feedback from school leadership and staff to improve environment
2. Shared accountability from the District office to the school level; no passing the buck
3. Reliable transportation with on-time arrivals and departures
4. Regardless of location, buildings are aesthetically pleasing, operable and functional for the grade-level appropriate
5. District and schools are proactive planners making data-based decisions; the system is efficacious

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?

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
Priority 1: Be More Student-Centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give teachers and principals more autonomy and latitude with managing classrooms and schools. Empower them to center students’ needs in their instruction and school climate efforts. ▪ Increase opportunities for experiential learning either in school or through partnerships (e.g., Farm-to-Table curriculum) ▪ Assess alternatives to testing, such as project based learning ▪ Provide Montessori training for all faculty ▪ Reduce the student to teacher ratio, so more time can be spent with each student ▪ Initiate college and career readiness in middle school; help students identify interests and develop pathways towards career interests ▪ Give students (middle school and high school) more of a voice in developing the District’s direction. Involve them in change efforts. They are the end user.
Priority 2: Family Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure each school has a FT social worker and nurse adequate staff to address the underlying challenges that students are experiencing at home, including economic instability, mental health challenges. ▪ Develop and source trauma responsible teams in each school (Note: while teachers are trained, they are unable to fully address student’s needs) ▪ Examine and evaluate the need for therapeutic schools in the District, especially with most schools lacking appropriate resources to support children of trauma ▪ Provide in-school comprehensive services to families, such as laundry accessibility, food pantry and health clinics)
Priority 3: Workforce Quality and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Principals and teachers must work as one team, not as multiple teams going in different directions ▪ Develop a pipeline for future vacancies ▪ Increase compensation and benefits to a competitive level ▪ Provide on-going mentorship for principals
Priority 4: Culture Shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for teachers (within grade levels, but across buildings) to collaborate and learn from each other ▪ Minimize isolated thinking (silos) and competition among schools ▪ Be more transparent at all levels to increase trust within the District ▪ Demonstrate value and respect for all employees, regardless of location, position and ethnicity
Priority 5: Ensure Racial Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some schools in the system have far more resources than others. Schools whose students have the greatest needs often have the least amount of resources to meet these needs. More resources need to be given to these schools. ▪ Some teachers are evaluated in areas, that others are not

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
Priority 6: Restructure System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstate feeder patterns to stabilize neighborhoods and to take advantage of neighborhood support and investment Examine having three sub-districts for elementary, middle and high schools because it would be more manageable to have smaller groups of administrators
Priority 7: Program Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase investment in afterschool programming and include compensation for teachers who manage Increase investment in for in-school programming (e.g., teen outreach, robotics program, culinary program, Springboard to Learning) and include compensation for teachers who manage
Priority 8: Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help people understand the value of investing in public education and how they can support the District as volunteers or Foundation donors
Priority 9: Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess contracting bus service compared to bus ownership; if some schools are closed and the District moves towards more neighborhood schools, it may find it more cost effective to own Invest in smaller shuttle buses; this is especially useful if high school students need to travel to other schools for specific classes

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

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Possible Rationale</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Factor: Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity should be included – an overcapacity school is unsafe and an under capacity school wastes resources Be more flexible or lenient with under capacity schools in North City because 1) disinvestment has influenced school capacity; 2) closing a North City school reduces the sense of community Capacity needs to be defined based on evidence-based research and student need. What is the best capacity for students needing additional resources due to trauma, poverty, etc.?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Factor: Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School performance should not be included because some schools have higher academic performance because their students are selected If students in a low performing school aren't receiving all the needed resources, they are being penalized exponentially – 1) low income family with possible trauma; 2) limited school resources to address the trauma; and 3) school closure, which increases student trauma Homelessness influences academic performance. Therefore, if academic performance is included, SLPS must consider the number of homeless students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Factor: Feeder Patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeder patterns no longer exist in SLPS' system of choice. The ability to choose has eliminated feeder patterns and the District should really consider returning to neighborhood elementary and middle school feeder patterns. Re-establish feeder patterns and invest heavily in those schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Factor: Building Age & Condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be considered and SLPS should also look at the school's ability to meet the full needs (academic, social, emotional, etc.) of students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance and Location of SLPS Magnet and Charter Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magnet schools draw students from throughout the District; and if a charter school is close by, when a District school closes, students may attend that school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Time and Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a maximum travel time for elementary, middle and high school students; if possible limit travel time to ≤ 30 to 35 minutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentration of Homeless Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SLPS needs to assess where these students are living and attempt to reduce the transportation time for them.

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

<p>Provide Timely Communication: Communicate with families, students and staff early and often. Ensure they understand why the closure is occurring, how the decision was made and what to expect when (timeline), explain the selection process and how schools were prioritized.</p>
<p>Establish a Plan for Teachers and Staff: School leadership and newly transferred teachers need to have an opportunity to bond and to develop working relationships. Schools should welcome new teachers, not shun them.</p>
<p>Provide Multiple Options for Student: Allow families to choose the receiving school they desire. The options provided must be comparable and consider the student/family's needs. Consider proximity to home and student/family's preferences.</p>
<p>Allow Receiving Schools Appropriate Time to Prepare: Teachers and support staff should have time to learn about new students. It could be helpful if the prior grade teacher could share information about the student (this is likely info that isn't included in the student's file). Have schools assign a shadow buddy, if possible.</p>
<p>Introduce Students and Families to New School: Host a welcome event for incoming students and provide transportation for the family and sibling childcare, if needed ; conduct any needs assessments before school starts; receiving teacher (and social worker) needs to meet with the family to truly understand their needs (or barriers to school attendance).</p>
<p>Maintain Some Familiarity: If possible, transfer some teachers to the same schools as transferred students.</p>
<p>Improve Exterior and Interior of Receiving School: SLPS should ensure the receiving school is attractive and welcoming to new students. Students shouldn't be transferred from a "poor" to a "fair" school.</p>

St. Louis Public School District
 Community Visioning Process
 Community Visioning Roundtable
 Principals – Thursday, March 12, 2020
 Lorren Buck

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ slow ▪ disconnected ▪ accountable ▪ fragmented ▪ challenging ▪ struggling ▪ surviving ▪ free (2) ▪ innovative with select schools ▪ Changing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attack ▪ Resilient ▪ Caring (2) ▪ Battling ▪ Optimistic ▪ Progressing

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

<p><i>Faculty & Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency: “the left should know what the right is doing” ▪ Systematic and consistent ▪ Responsive ▪ Supportive, all support given ▪ Great teachers, competitive salaries and professional development opportunities ▪ accountability 	<p><i>Increased Student Support Services & Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career ladder, opportunities for students (career and extracurricular) ▪ All student needs met
<p><i>Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentional commitment to equity 	<p><i>Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy relationships between students, parents and staff
<p><i>Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant, quality education ▪ Student centered ▪ Data driven ▪ Innovative, progressive (self-sustaining/independent integrated curriculum i.e. nature and environmentally conscious) ▪ 	<p><i>Student Performance / Educational Outcomes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students meeting full potential ▪ High achievement and performing ▪ STEM pathways
<p><i>Stronger Community Connections & Engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative community ▪ Connected to the community 	<p><i>Heightened Safety</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safe and healthy environment

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?

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
Priority 1: Teacher & Staff Capacity, Development & Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better alignment with funds and goals ▪ Recruitment and retention of great staff, teachers (court with great salary) ▪ Clear intentions towards equity ▪ Investment to St. Louis community (neighborhoods and families) ▪ Prioritize addressing inequality for students (social and emotional) ▪ Revamp/restructure St. Louis plan (system of supporting first year teachers/principals); collaborate with consultants and administrators (improved communications) ▪ Replace step salary to draw more qualified teachers, honor teachers with experience. A glass ceiling exists where experienced teachers are locked into a lower pay. Principals should not make less than the highest paid teacher. No parity in salary – raises according to schedule ▪ Wellness package/plan for administrations who work in toxic environment. Staff are hospitalized, having mental breaks, anxiety and heart attacks ▪ Incentives for teachers who work in higher needs schools
Priority 2: Facilities and School Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New buildings/facilities with updated technology to meet students' needs ▪ Safe and healthy environment (fulltime support staff: therapeutic, trauma informed lens) ▪ Clean, working facility, new furnishings – overall esthetics) ▪ Inclusive, welcoming environment for all students, address barriers for ESL students ▪ Intentional, purposeful and equitable mission ▪ Routine facility checks ▪ Water fountains which accommodate water bottles to minimize germs
Priority 3: Family Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase services to students (emotional, social, academic) ▪ Every school is a wrap-a-round school ▪ Before and after school care
Priority 4: Build Students' Desire To Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students must come first ▪ Later start time for middle and high schools
Priority 5: Innovative & Specialized Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-to-one technology for all students ▪
Priority 6: Enhanced Curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standard based/ equity aligned curriculum ▪ Decrease testing, increase instructional time ▪ Congruent curriculum which doesn't change annually. Two different curriculums exist for 2nd and 3rd grade. Fidelity is needed so disconnect doesn't persist
Priority 7: Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly communicated mission and vision to municipal organizations and community groups (aligned and accountable) ▪ Collaboration with city to recruit new families entering the city (marketing efforts) ▪ Agitate board and mayor to be vocal and advocate for SLPS (deescalate competition with charter schools – perception that resources are taken from SLPS and given to charter schools) ▪ Assemble liaison and political education committee to champion SLPS with DESE
Priority 8: Stronger Academic Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student achievement ▪ STEM classes and extracurricular at all schools ▪ Scaffolding/support for all students to ensure they receive grade level instruction ▪ More structure is needed for summer school. It currently exists as a babysitting service.
Priority 9: Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend miles on student transportation so that student has access/options to more schools ▪ Hold bus company accountable. Students often wait for a bus which never comes. No communication is given and students are penalized for absence at school. Parents are waiting for busses which don't come. It is a safety issue specifically during cold weather. Technology is needed to track busses (like Uber app)

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

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Possible Rationale</i>
▪ Existing Factor: Feeder Patterns	▪ <i>No comment</i>
▪ Existing Factor: City-Wide Economic Development	▪ Possible re-initialization of neighborhoods
▪ Existing Factor: Performance	▪ Academic achievement is rooted in poverty. It shouldn't be a consideration. Low performing students are put in specific buildings and kept out of others
▪ Existing Factor: Building Age & Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building age/condition should not be ignored ▪ Would magnet schools with deteriorating building be closed? (Double standard) ▪ Convert building to specialty schools
▪ Existing Factor: All Factors	▪ Do schools need to fail all four criteria or a portion in order to close?

5. What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on students, families and staff?

▪ Provide Timely Communication: transparency; stick with deadline of decision; roll out in phases and notify early	▪ Repurpose Vacant Buildings:
▪ Maximize Student Options:	▪ Maintain Vacant Buildings Or Demolish Them:
▪ Aggressively Advertise Available School Properties:	▪

**St. Louis Public School District
Community Visioning Process
Principals' Roundtable
March 12, 2020
Natalie Parks**

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verge of Improvement ▪ Challenged (4) ▪ Doesn't care about: people, facilities, finances ▪ Declining ▪ Too many schools ▪ Lacks resources ▪ Changing (2) ▪ In Transition (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trying ▪ Diverse ▪ Potential (2) ▪ Difficult Students

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

<p><i>Faculty & Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trust and synergy amongst staff and leaders ▪ High quality teachers ▪ Have a pool of qualified applicants to choose from when hiring ▪ Competitive compensation for staff ▪ Staff have 21st century skills ▪ Teachers are more prepared when hired ▪ Have the right people in place to support the curriculum ▪ Staff are provided the flexibility to determine the structure that best fits their school (e.g., bell schedules, block schedules, recess time, etc.) 	<p><i>Increased Student Support Services & Resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smaller staff : student ratios ▪ State-of-the-art facilities ▪ Buildings are equipped with 21st century technology ▪ Buildings are equipped with the right infrastructure for technology ▪ Each school has a full-time librarian
<p><i>Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culturally responsive practices ▪ Equitable practices ▪ Equity across the board in terms of resources and services 	<p><i>Intentional Parent Engagement & Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active community and parent involvement
<p><i>Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality instruction ▪ Focused on doing what's best for the kids/students ▪ Embedded exposure – exposure to things other than just curriculum ▪ Focus on 21st century skills ▪ Offer more electives at all levels – not just high school ▪ More extracurricular activities ▪ Curricula chosen with teacher, parent, and administration input and chosen based on learning experiences 	<p><i>Student Performance / Educational Outcomes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High academic achievement ▪ Happy and engaged students ▪ Less focus on test scores ▪ Cameras in elementary schools ▪ Alarms on doors (so they know if kids leave – elopement a concern)

<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic plans are developed and implemented with a focus on timing ▪ Employees are welcomed and cared for ▪ Communication is more efficient and transparent – administrators know when activities are taking place in their building (e.g., maintenance workers) 	<p>Focus on Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School is safe and welcoming (mental, emotional, and physical safety) ▪ Schools are clean ▪ Schools are well maintained ▪ Security system that works for people in the building – one that doesn't make it more difficult for those who work there ▪ We feed our children healthy foods and care about their physical/nutritional health ▪ Mental health and trauma teams full time on site in every school
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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?

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
<p>Priority 1: Increase Services and Resources for Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer mental health services in every school ▪ Invest in technology; purchase Chromebooks for students; get updated Smartboards; develop a system to maintain these ▪ Be innovative and don't just repeat what's been done before ▪ Ensure a small school feel that allows teachers the ability to provide special attention to students who need it ▪ Ensure alternative schools are actually providing alternative education, not just focused on disciplinary measures ▪ Ensure there are enough alternative school spots for those who need placement there ▪ Address current-day developmental needs (e.g., research indicates brains are functioning differently due to technology and schools should adhere to this) ▪ Provide teaching assistants beyond pre-k so that teachers can differentiate instruction. Teachers have students at multiple levels and need to be able to focus on one group at a time to provide instruction to their level. They need someone else in the classroom to help with this. ▪ Focus on how to provide differentiated instruction rather than expecting teachers to be able to teach a group of students at varying levels with no additional help or assistance or support ▪ Provide opportunities for students to learn and explore rather than only focusing on test scores
<p>Priority 2: Ensure Equity Across the Entire District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure funding is equitable across schools and students ▪ Ensure equitable enrollment across schools ▪ Ensure equitable programs and resources across schools – especially high school programs and sports ▪ Look beyond performance scores into the whys behind the scores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why is performance low for some students? Could it be that they had a substitute teacher for 3 years in a row? Could it be they are exposed to trauma and have daily safety concerns? Could it be that building problems are taking away from educational opportunities and instruction time?
<p>Priority 3: Increase the Safety of the Students and Staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security cameras inside and outside of schools ▪ Allow for disciplinary consequences for pre-k-2nd graders ▪ Have a safety officer present in every building – even the elementary schools

Priority 4: Increase Available Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide higher teacher salaries ▪ Upgrade facilities to make them state-of-the-art ▪ Need innovation about how funding is sought – increase grant writing, working with foundations, and community partnerships ▪ Focus on funding to innovate rather than just sustain
Priority 5: Proactively Plan and communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt a proactive approach to problem solving ▪ Plan ahead of time for changes and decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't rush decisions to roll out new initiatives or large changes without providing appropriate time to learn, plan, gather resources, etc. ○ First conduct research, consider relevant stakeholders, and the impact on the population served prior to making decisions ○ Ensure that new curricula or initiatives are appropriate for the SLPS population (as opposed to it working with another district that is extremely different) ▪ Communicate effectively at all levels within the district <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include communication about resources, how funding is determined and used, and day to day activities
Priority 6: Increase Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Authentic outreach focused on meeting families' needs ▪ Change the negative narrative the community has about SLPS by focusing on how we market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Market a number of different ways ○ Create the SLPS brand – what makes SLPS different from other schools – it is not that we provide reading and literacy, all schools teach that

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

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Possible Rationale</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Feeder Patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional students may leave the district if you close their schools ▪ Will families have a choice about what school to attend if their school is closed? If so, how will this affect feeder patterns?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: City-Wide Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate where economic development is targeted to take place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The academic performance lens needs to be clean so that test scores are not the only thing examined; need to consider the why behind the test scores and focus on solving the why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Building Age & Condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate the ranking to staff and the rationale for the ranking ▪ The district must take responsibility for allowing the schools to get this bad
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Building Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will the schools be designed to fit the needs of the population served? ▪ If you fill buildings based on “capacity”, must ensure you also provide the resources to support those students ▪ Some schools are using space for support services; will this be considered when determining capacity ▪ Spaces need to be learning appropriate, not just based on old numbers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Factor: Neighborhood Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the impact closures will have on the stability of the neighborhood ▪ There may be current community programs that will be severed with the closing of a school ▪ What is the impact of joining schools that have different cultures? ▪ Will the new school have the same support for families?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Factor: Impact on Individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the impact on the individuals from a humanistic approach rather than numbers ▪ Who will work with the students who are impacted? It is traumatic to have your school closed. ▪ Principals of schools will need to work together ▪ Will there be teachers and principals without jobs or who must relocate?

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

<p><i>Plan for Transition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instead of closing School A and having students join School B, redevelop the school so that students from School A & B will be developing a new school, J; must ensure the new school is completely different – new name, colors, mascot, etc. – even if in one of the old buildings ▪ Develop a plan for how students, faculty, and staff will transition ▪ This would be better timing for a transition that occurs in the 2021-2022 school year; this is extremely rushed for a decision for the 2020-2021 school year ▪ Hold a community activity to welcome new students, allow them to tour the building, do some team building and potentially rename the school ▪ Consolidation should be planned for separately and differently than the plan for closures ▪ Need a transition plan for school administrators and principals 	<p><i>Increase Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate often, early, and transparently ▪ Notify staff early if they will be out of a job or changing schools ▪ Create a hotline to answer questions
<p><i>Allow for More Opportunities for All Students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise the criteria for magnet schools to allow more students to have choice 	

St. Louis Public School District
 Community Visioning Process
 Principal’s Roundtable
 Thursday, March 12, 2020
 eNiCoL

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
Hidden Gem Different Outlier Challenged (2) Inefficient Lack of support services Traditional Facility problems Spread too thin Urban North/South divide		Underpaid Strained Diverse (2) Thriving

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

<i>Faculty & Staff</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fully Staffed with Highly qualified teachers ▪ Competitive salaries for every position ▪ Innovative leaders who are willing to step outside the box and who are empowered to take risks ▪ Strong, effective, consistent communication from the top down ▪ Strong retention at all levels (HR, Admin, teachers, etc.) ▪ Hire more maintenance staff (e.g. currently only 4-5 plumbers for entire district) 	<i>Increased Student Support Services & Resources</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional behavioral support staff ▪ Holistic needs met of every child
<i>Greater Emphasis On Diversity, Equity & Inclusion</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culturally-responsive faculty, district leaders, and curriculum ▪ 	<i>Buildings</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functioning toilets, water fountains at all schools ▪ Repairs made in timely manner ▪ Increase funding for maintenance staff and their resources for making repairs
<i>Enhanced Student Learning & Experiences</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No “one size fits all” reading programs ▪ Phonics prioritized (especially at elementary level) ▪ Higher quality curriculum ▪ Equitable distribution of technology and other learning/teaching resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ exposure increases opportunities for students 	<i>Student Performance / Educational Outcomes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No stifled systems
<i>Stronger Community Connections & Engagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respected learning communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “set clear boundaries on what should be acceptable” 	<i>Heightened Safety</i> n/a

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?

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
Priority 1: Get Rid of “Island Mentality”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cease inconsistency with enrollment policies from school-to-school (this happens currently especially with Pre-K) ▪ Better partnerships between schools (e.g. <i>when students change schools, graduate/transition - there should be a passing the torch meeting between teachers, counselors, students/families - with primary objective being to communicate the supports the student needs</i>) ▪ Improve overall identity of the District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “How do we get every school to be seen as an opportunity?” ▪ Increase Marketing - <i>people don’t know about all the good in the district</i>
Priority 2: Improve Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hire more qualified teachers ▪ Attention on further certifying current teachers, building teacher and leader capacity to perform at higher level ▪ Open therapeutic site/school for tier 3 students - “<i>Our teachers are not counselors!</i>” ▪ Culturally relevant, trauma-informed pedagogy
Priority 3: Increase Transparency and Improve Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve communication re: safety issues (internally to faculty/staff and externally to parents) ▪ Stop prioritizing 801 Staff for their children’s enrollment over general public
Priority 4: Improve Safety/Security Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stop allowing just anyone to walk into elementary schools (especially for pre-k) ▪ Scan Ids in schools (visitors) ▪ Hire more safety officers
Priority 5: Enrollment Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better define and Streamline entry/routes for enrolling in schools ▪ Close pre-k to Kdg. gap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 50% of families leave the district after pre-k ▪ Change recruitment procedure (e.g. 8th graders) ▪ Stronger home <> school connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school and parents “follow the student” - meaning exploring next options together and previous school/teacher meets with parent and new teachers/schools

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

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Possible Rationale</i>
▪ Added Factor: Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consider what opportunities will be available for incoming students, opportunities that are similar or better than opportunities at current schools
▪ Added Factor: Timing and Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choose options that will result in less time of students, teachers, families being left in limbo ▪ Re: timeliness, consider anything happening culturally, regionally, nationally - <i>don’t disrupt communities that are already being disrupted</i>

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff - give advance notice about school closures and be clear about position openings/opportunities to transfer within the district. Teachers need to plan for their career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/Families - be clear about available school options and provide information about schools so parents/families can make informed choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students - consider implementing more preventions and interventions in prep of merging schools/cultures/populations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ students are afraid to cross “turfs” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have students meet prior to new school year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seniors/Juniors meet with incoming students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All - Close the gaps in communication for all stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Release short and long term plans of what will be carried out by the district and what action items each of these 3 stakeholder groups should take in prep for the transition

St. Louis Public School District
 Community Visioning Process
 Community Visioning Roundtable
 SLPS Principals: Thursday, March 12, 2020
 Brittini A. Gray

Small Group Discussion Flip Chart Notes

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
Antiquated Unique Inequitable Transitioning	Inconsistent Improving (2) Changing (2)	Diverse Responsive Hopeful Steady Hectic

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

<p>Faculty & Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality teachers ▪ Fully staffed (teachers, supports, etc.) 	<p>Increased Student Support Services & Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wellness system to address the breadth of student and staff needs ▪ Diverse nutritional options
<p>Systems and Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Up to date technology ▪ Transparency and active involvement in decision making ▪ Funding in accordance with trends (STEM/STEAM etc.) ▪ Facilities and spaces that are distinct dedicated art studios, science labs, wood shop, etc. 	<p>Intentional Relationships w/ Parents & Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Support ▪ Parent Involvement
<p>Student Performance / Educational Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistency in Standards ▪ Curriculum that is in alignment with the assessments but differentiated pacing of students with greater depth than currently offered ▪ Preparation for adulthood, including college, trades, entrepreneurship, etc. 	<p>Adjectives of excellent schools included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proactive - engaging - inclusive - rigorous

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?

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Changes within the Priority</i>
Priority 1: Efficiency of Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transportation ▪ Purchasing ▪ Human Resources ▪ Operations ▪ Community Partnerships ▪ Assessments ▪ Communication ▪ Facilities ▪ Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial stability ▪ Better tech and better use of the tech ▪ Staff cohesiveness ▪ invest in proper training of staff for the listed systems
Priority 2: Appeal to Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ focus groups/ conversations + action ▪ increase adaptability ▪ improve buildings and facilities, esp. curb appeal
Priority 3: Fully Resourced RTI Process (Response to Intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All staff, faculty, admin trained and implementing trauma-informed practices ▪ Student Resources are abundant and fully staffed ▪ Diverse attention to needs of schools, not a one size fits all implementation plan ▪ Data backed strategies
Priority 4: Increase Pride in District and Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curb appeal ▪ belonging and value ▪ Deepened relationships with each other and community ▪ increased collaboration ▪ Intentional community outreach in ways that are responsive to not imposing on the community ▪ Social Media Presence and Traditional Media- new narratives needed

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

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Possible Rationale</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Feeder Patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeder patterns are not organic, and half used with students going all over the place. Is there a correlation between feeder patterns and building age- current feeder schools already have outstanding building and facility needs that are not being addressed...with increases in populations from closures, how will we judge the adequacy of the space? (All feedback here was connected to building age and condition)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Building Age and Condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Important for curb appeal and pride. Financially in terms of resourcing other areas, what happens once they close- does the financial burden cease? What happens with the vacant building?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This the least important factor for principals because there are so many factors to consider with performance besides academic achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Factor: Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broken process with enrollment and school selection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neighborhoods and Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will school closures and mergers impact the school environment, but also the neighborhoods that those schools are in? Will schools be repurposed for the needs of the community, or what will happen in general? ▪ The high schools compete with each other, how do we decrease competition by diversifying academic program options by school buildings so they are all distinct.

What might be done to lessen the impacts of closures on staff, students and families?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide Timely Communication that is Transparent: Have open and honest communication with students and families, staff and neighbors in a timely manner. The district should also do in school presentations in addition to the public meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimize Impact of School Closings: Community based decision about what happens with schools that are closed. Create new positions as needed, for staff that would otherwise be let go, that helps improve the efficiency of systems as mentioned earlier. Also a desire to minimize the shifts that are happening with students and staff, perhaps employ a cohort process where consistency can be maintained between students and staff together, as well as peers (principals with teachers of their choice, students with friends). Also gauge interest of staff to stay/leave as a way to minimize impact- less layoffs if x amount plan to leave anyway. Offer staff choice in their next placement. Support for additional certifications, provisions, subs, etc.... ways for people to keep their jobs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximize Student Options and Intake: Give parents and students multiple options to increase the chances that the students will stay in the district and get the best educational fit. Employing student choice and cohorts as mentioned before so they stay with peers. Ensure schools are fully staffed to receive new populations. Offer summer school, tours, meet and greets, and so forth for students who will be moving to new schools. Seamless transition for enrollment process and transportation, and assist families with transition, i.e. providing uniforms and other essentials needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process to determine what happens with closed buildings.