

Anacostia High School: Informing School Transformation Strategies with Family and Community Feedback

Introduction & Methodology

Introduction

This project was undertaken with the purpose of collecting parent and community feedback to inform Anacostia High School's *School Transformation Plan*. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), introduced in 2015, requires all states and DC to develop new accountability systems and provide targeted support to under-performing schools. In accordance with ESSA, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has created a framework to identify Comprehensive Support Schools, or schools that fall in the lowest five percent. These schools are eligible for additional resources to plan and implement a tailored School Transformation Plan to improve outcomes for all students. In order to ensure that community voice informed the creation of the School Transformation Plan, DC Public Schools (DCPS) held open forums and administered surveys to collect feedback from the broader school community, including teachers, staff, families, and students regarding the following priority areas:

- Shared leadership
- Engagement
- Culture of Achievement
- Academics
- Equity

In addition, community feedback participants provided feedback on three different types of school models:

- Project-based learning
- Expeditionary learning
- Career-oriented

Group Discussion Methodology

In order to get robust feedback from the Anacostia High School community, DCPS and PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education) partnered to conduct a community feedback session in which participants shared their thoughts and hopes for Anacostia High School in a group discussion. During the community feedback session, **21 participants (one family member, five teachers, five staff, and 10 participants who did not disclose their relationships to the school)** shared their ideas and priorities for how they'd like to see the school improve. The group discussion was guided by a set of questions that was developed in partnership with DCPS, PAVE, and the school principal. These questions were centered on the types of supports Anacostia High School would need in order to make improvements and which types of school transformation models would fit best for Anacostia High School. In addition, participants noted their comments for each priority area listed above on chart paper placed around the room.

Survey Methodology

A total of **66 surveys** were collected from the Anacostia High School community between February 12, 2019 and February 22, 2019. Surveys were administered at the community feedback session, as well as through

other various channels, including email and school outreach. Six surveys were collected at the in-person community feedback session. The school distributed and collected another fifty-five surveys, and five were collected online. The majority of the respondents were teachers (Figure A). In addition, respondents were associated with students across a variety of grade levels (Figure B). The survey can be found in Appendix A.

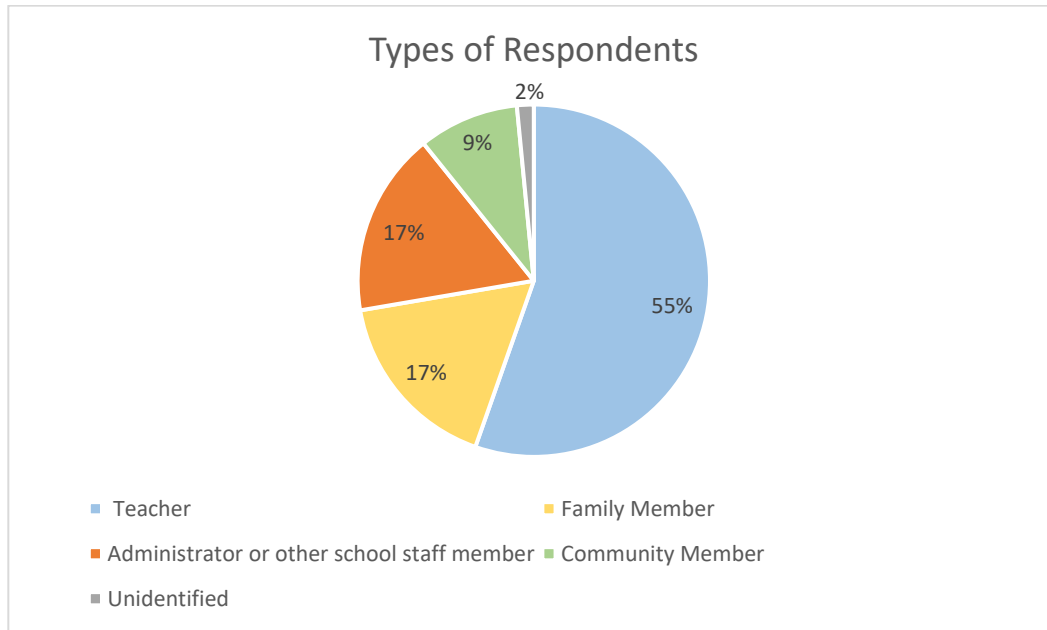


Figure A. Types of stakeholders that took Anacostia High School's survey.

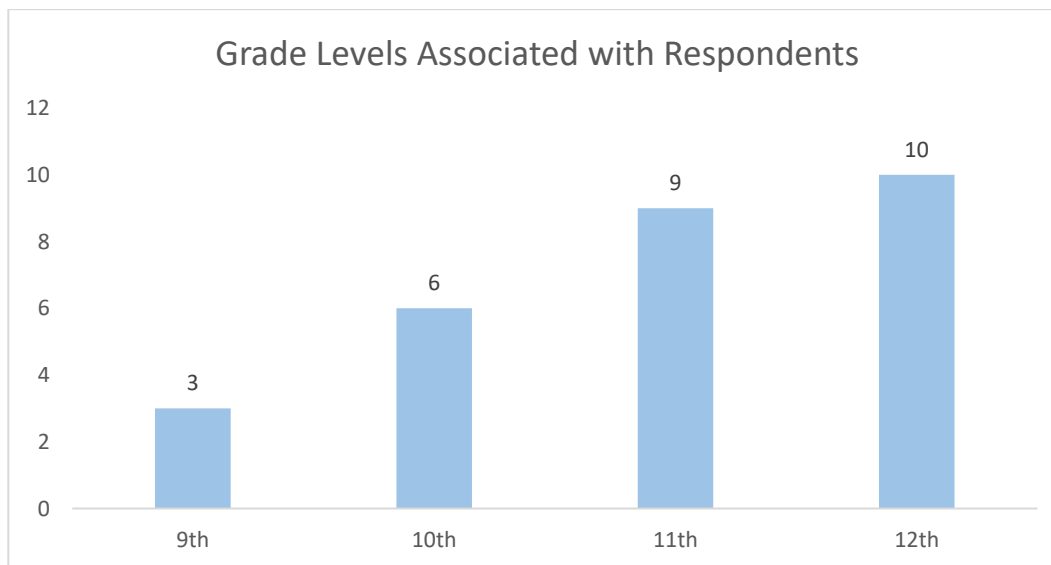


Figure B. Student grade levels associated with survey respondents.

Report Note

More information about survey responses and data trends can be found in Appendix B. Quotes under the Community Voices section are direct quotes from the group discussion, responses from the open-ended questions on the survey, or comments noted on chart paper that was set up around the room to collect responses.

Key Findings

Stakeholders felt positively about engagement practices at Anacostia High School. Stakeholders would like to see a focus on increasing opportunities for getting student, family and teacher feedback.

Under academics, stakeholders would like to see a focus on meeting the diverse needs of all students. Stakeholders also saw a need for mental health supports for students as well as a focus on social-emotional learning.

Regarding school models, stakeholders suggested combining aspects from all three models to best fit student needs. For example, combining the expeditionary and career-oriented models to best leverage opportunities in our city. Stakeholders noted a need to keep trauma-informed training and community engagement at the center of any chosen model.

Survey and Group Discussion Detailed Findings

Shared Leadership:

Survey Responses (n=66)

- The responses regarding shared leadership at Anacostia High School varied.
- 53.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school includes the voices of staff, teachers, students, and families in their decision making. 18.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 46.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that school leaders asked their opinion about decisions made at the school. 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure C).

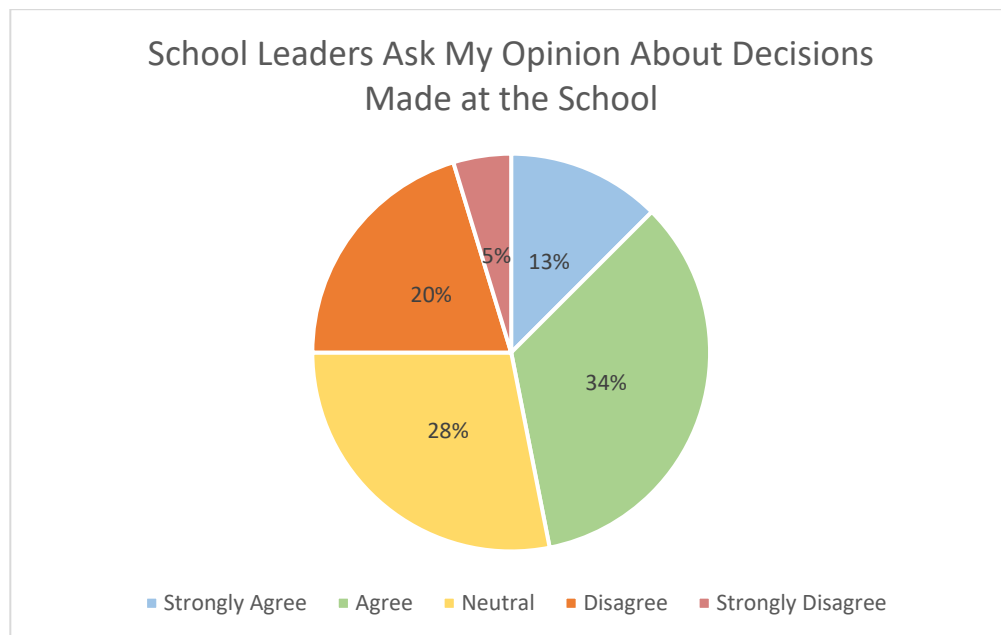


Figure C. Responses regarding shared leadership at Anacostia High School.

Group Discussion Responses

- There need to be more opportunities for families to have a voice in school decisions.
- Teachers want a system to share their opinions and their needs, which would also help to increase teacher retention.
- There needs to be more emphasis on shared leadership so that the school can be resilient in case of leadership transitions.

Community Voices

“Engage with the teachers more often to not only make decisions but also express their needs and wants in order to increase teacher retention.” -Anacostia Teacher

Engagement:

Survey Responses (n=66)

- The majority of respondents felt positively about engagement at Anacostia High School.
- 72.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school has made them feel welcome and connected to the school community. 12.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure D).
- 64% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school engaged all members of its community, including staff, students, and families. Only 12.5% of respondents disagreed; no respondents strongly disagreed.

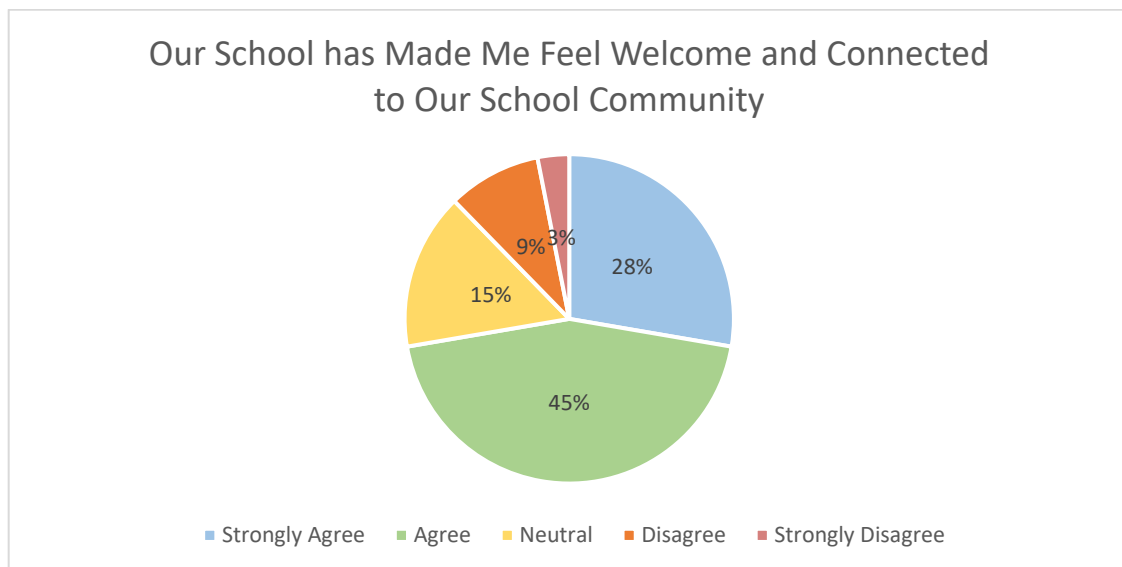


Figure D. Responses regarding engagement at Anacostia High School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Teachers want more effective training and support in order to be set up for success and stay long-term at Anacostia High School.
- The current principal has encouraged strong community engagement practices, and stakeholders feel connected to the school.
- Currently, the PTA is inactive.
- There needs to be more investment in partnering with community organizations.

Community Voices

"We need adequate and effective training. We have teachers quitting after their first year, but they are at a loss about where to start...We need to support our teachers to make sure that they can be successful and confident in their craft." -Anacostia Teacher

"Since Principal Haith's arrival, Anacostia feels like it has reopened its door to the community!" -Anacostia Staff

Culture of Achievement:

Survey Responses (n=66)

- Responses regarding culture of achievement at Anacostia High School varied.
- 72.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students and staff at the school have strong relationships. Only 9.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 35.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students, staff, and families take pride in Anacostia High School. 41.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure E).

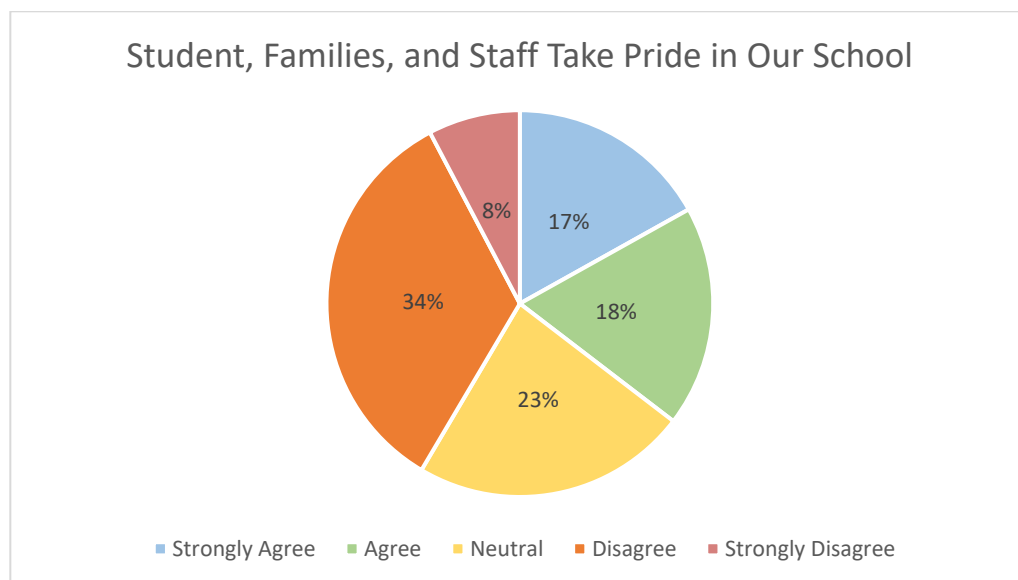


Figure E. Responses regarding culture of achievement at Anacostia High School.

Groups Discussion Responses

- A large number of teachers have great relationships with students.
- There should be more of a focus on instilling pride in students and staff to improve the narrative of Ward 8 and "East of the River" schools.

Community Voices

"We need to allow students to share their successes beyond East of the River." -Anacostia Staff

"Let's use social media to share our successes." -Anacostia Staff

Academics:

Survey Responses (n=66)

- The responses regarding academics at Anacostia High School varied.
- 40% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students at Anacostia High School have appropriate supports for learning. 43.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure F).
- Almost half of the respondents (49.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that students at the school are regularly challenged. 29.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 26.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students at the school are excited about learning. 46.9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

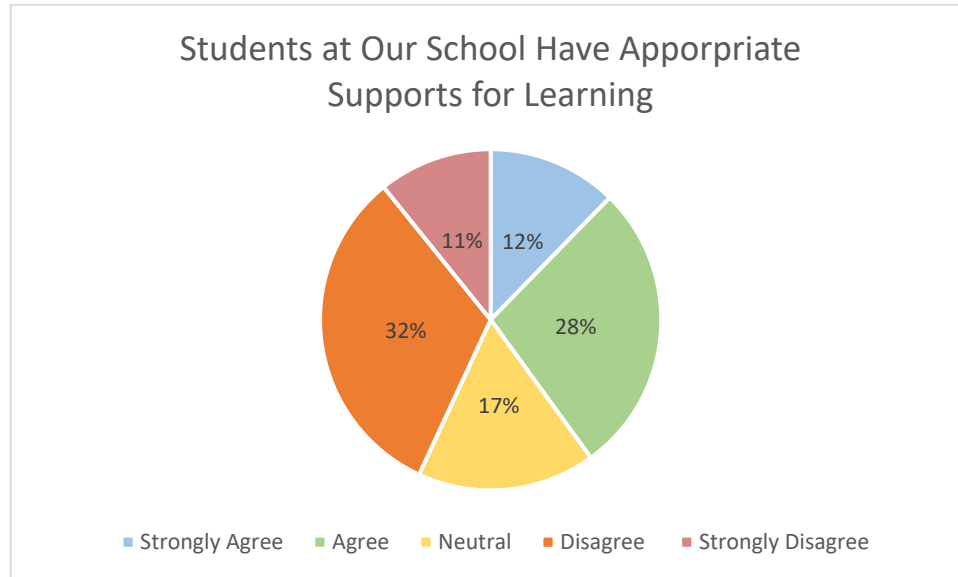


Figure F. Responses regarding academics at Anacostia High School.

Group Discussion Responses

- There is a need for more teachers that are able to support AP classes as well as intervention and resource classes.
- There is a need for more project-based learning and relevant curriculum.
- There is a need to create multiple pathways to post-secondary success.

Community Voices

"We need our project-based learning to be more inclusive."-Anacostia Teacher

"We need to ensure that we have enough teachers in the budget to support core content needs, elective and AP needs, and intervention needs, on top of basic special education needs." -Anacostia Teacher

"Equity is [providing] a variety of choices to many students beyond the doors of Anacostia, such as CTE, vocational [training], and college." -Anacostia Staff

Equity:

Survey Responses (n=66)

- Responses regarding equity at Anacostia High School were varied.
- 26.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school prepares all students for success later in life. 45.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure G).
- 44.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school prioritizes the students that are the farthest from opportunity. 29.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

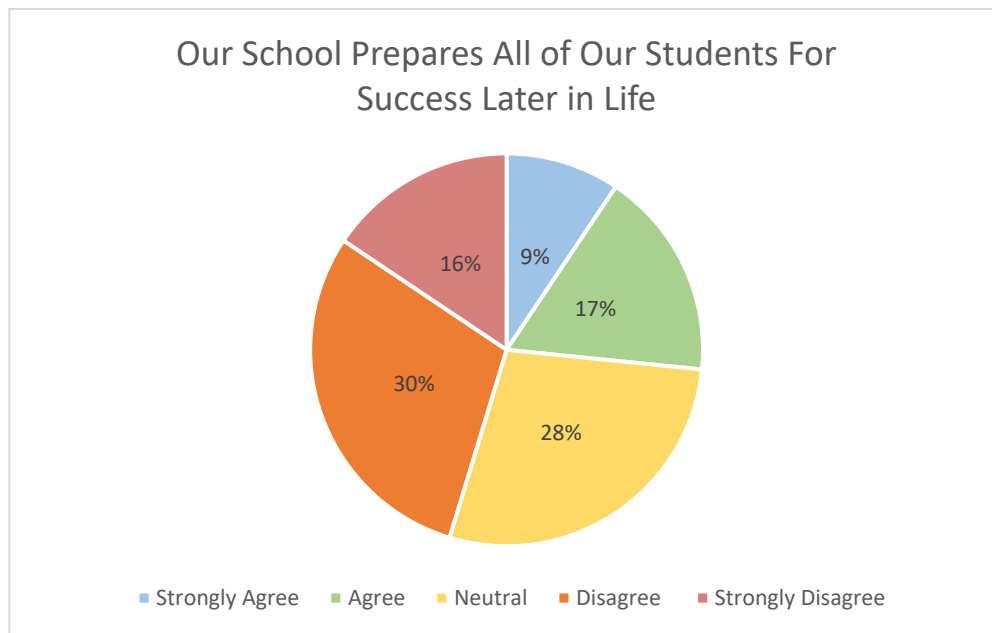


Figure G. Responses regarding equity at Anacostia High School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Anacostia High School has a high at-risk student population, special education population, and large homeless student population that need school-wide interventions to set them up for success.
- There are a lot of students who have experienced trauma and need trauma-informed supports.

Community Voices

“Special education students must have targeted funding. If they don’t improve, the school doesn’t improve.” - Anacostia Teacher

“We have a lot of students that are their own parents—they have to cook for themselves and their siblings. Coming here can be embarrassing for the kids that don’t have parents. We’re asking 9th graders to deal with thirty years of intergenerational trauma and their own trauma.” -Community Member

Feedback on School Models

<i>School Model Option</i>	<i>Participant Feedback</i>
<i>Project-Based Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would be a good way to engage students. • Current JROTC program at school currently incorporates many pieces of project-based learning. • There is a concern that this model could be hard to incorporate, specifically due to issues of inconsistent attendance.
<i>Expeditionary Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would be a good model to use because of resources, such as the Smithsonian museums, that are available in DC. • This model is a good way to get the community involved and build partnerships with the school.
<i>Career-Oriented</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering that many students at Anacostia High School may not pursue college, this model would prepare students for a successful post-secondary career.

Key Findings

- Consider pulling from all models while keeping student and community engagement and college and career readiness at the center.
- Consider combining the expeditionary and career-oriented model.
- Consider incorporating a trauma-informed approach to these models.

Appendix A

Community Feedback Session Survey**School:** _____

Rank the following improvement focus areas from most important to you to least important to you (**1—most important, 5—least important**).

____ Shared Leadership ____ Engagement ____ Culture of Achievement ____ Academics ____ Equity

Please choose the best answer for each of the following questions.

Shared Leadership:

Our school includes the voices of students, families, teachers, and other staff in their decision-making.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

School leaders ask my opinion about decisions made at the school.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about how our school **shares leadership** and decision-making?

Engagement

Our school has made me feel welcome and connected to our school community.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Our school engages regularly with all members of its community, including staff, students, and families.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about **engagement** at our school?

Culture of Achievement:

Students and staff have strong relationships at our school.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Students, families, and staff take pride in our school.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about our **Culture of Achievement**?

Please choose the best answer for each of the following questions.

Academics:

Students at our school have appropriate supports for learning.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Students at our school are regularly challenged.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Students at our school are excited about learning.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please indicate anything else you'd like us to know about **academics** at our school.

Equity:

Our school prepares all of our students for success later in life, in both college and careers.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Our school prioritizes the students that are farthest from opportunities.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please indicate anything else you'd like us to know about **equity** at our school.

Is there anything else we should consider for **our school transformation plan**?

What is the best way for our school to communicate with you?

To provide updates and information (check all that apply):

☐ Email ☐ Call ☐ Text ☐ Paper Flyer ☐ Other

To provide feedback (check all that apply):

☐ Online survey ☐ Paper survey ☐ Focus group/meeting

Are you a:

☐ Parent or Guardian ☐ Grandparent or other family member ☐ Administrator or other school staff member ☐ Community Organization
☐ Student ☐ Teacher ☐ Community Member

Appendix B

Rank the following improvement focus areas from most important to least important. Respondents ranked 1-5 (1=high, 5=low).					
Topic	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Shared Leadership	15.22%	15.22%	10.87%	17.39%	41.3%
Engagement	15.22%	28.26%	28.26%	19.56%	8.69%
Culture of Achievement	30.43%	15.22%	23.91%	17.39%	13.04%
Academics	26.09%	34.78%	17.39%	8.69%	13.04%
Equity	13.04%	6.52%	19.57%	36.96%	23.91%

Community Satisfaction					
SHARED LEADERSHIP: STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our school includes the voices of students, families, teachers, and other staff in their decision making.	12.3%	41.5%	27.7%	12.3%	6.2%
School leaders ask my opinion about decisions made at the school.	12.5%	34.4%	28.1%	20.3%	4.7%
ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Our school has made me feel welcome and connected to our school community.	27.7%	44.6%	15.4%	9.2%	3.1%
Our school engages regularly with all members of its community including staff, students, and families.	23.4%	40.6%	23.4%	12.5%	0%
CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Students and staff have strong relationships at our school.	20%	52.3%	18.5%	6.2%	3.1%
Students, families, and staff take pride in our school.	16.9%	18.5%	23.1%	33.8%	7.7%
ACADEMICS: STATEMENTS					
Students at our school have appropriate supports for learning.	12.3%	27.7%	16.9%	32.3%	10.8%
Students at our school are regularly challenged.	12.3%	36.9%	21.5%	23.1%	6.2%
Students at our school are excited about learning.	6.3%	20.3%	26.6%	34.4%	12.5%
EQUITY: STATEMENTS					
Our school prepares all of our students for success later in life, in both college and careers.	9.4%	17.2%	28.1%	29.7%	15.6%
Our school prioritizes the students that are the furthest from opportunities.	13.8%	30.8%	26.2%	18.5%	10.8%

