

## Kramer Middle 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 Kramer Middle 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 to targeted resources and 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

#### Group Discussion Methodology

In order to get robust feedback from each school community, DCPS and PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education) partnered to conduct community feedback sessions in which participants were part of a group discussion to share their thoughts and hopes for Kramer Middle School. During the community feedback session, six individuals attended and **four participated (two family members, one school administrator, one student, and the school principal)** by sharing their ideas and priorities for how they'd like to see the school improve. The group discussion was centered around a set of guiding discussion questions that was developed in partnership with DCPS, PAVE, and the school principal. The discussion questions can be found in Appendix A.

#### Survey Methodology

We collected a total of **14 surveys** from the Kramer Middle School community between January 23, 2019 and February 15, 2019. Surveys were also administered through other various channels, including email and school outreach. Our survey respondents spanned across various grade levels. Four surveys were collected at the in-person community feedback session; 10 were collected online. The majority of the respondents were family members (Figure A). In addition, our respondents were associated with students across a variety of grade levels (Figure B). The survey can be found in Appendix B.

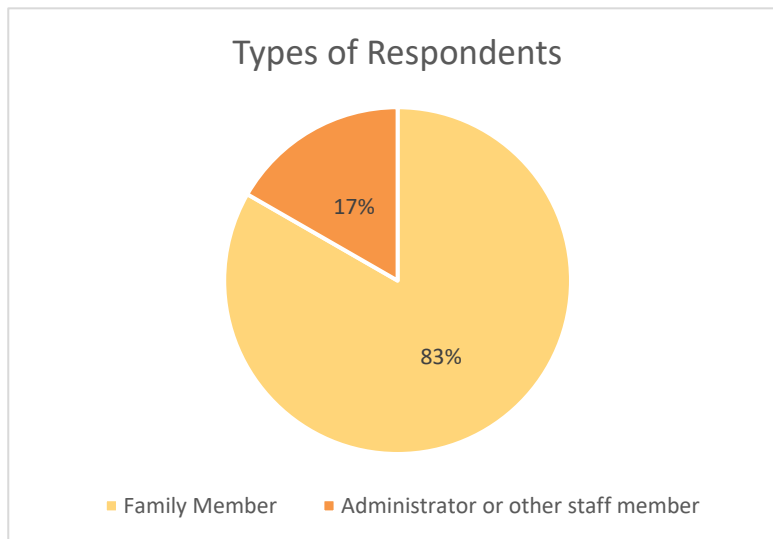


Figure A. Types of stakeholders that took Kramer Middle School's survey.

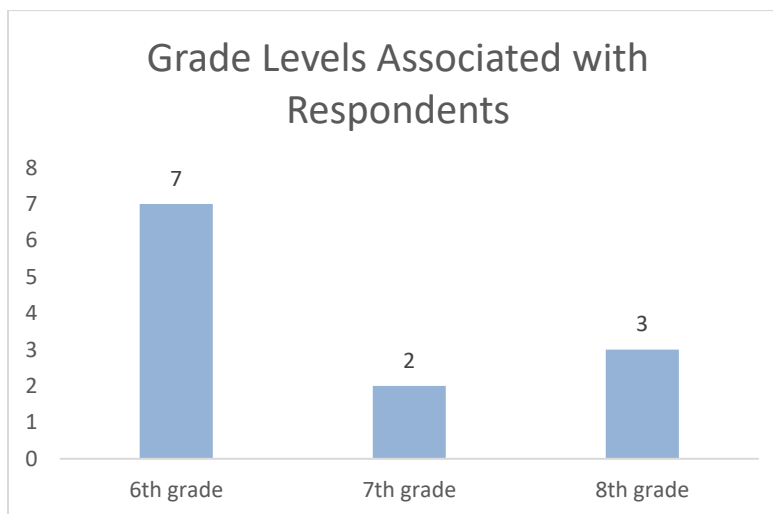


Figure B. Student grade levels associated with survey respondents.

## Report Methodology

More information about survey responses and data trends can be found in Appendix C. Quotes under the Community Voices section are direct quotes from the group discussion.

## Key Findings

Stakeholders feel positively about shared leadership practices at Kramer Middle School and would like to see a continued focus on ensuring that community voices are included in the decision-making process and increased family and community engagement overall.

Stakeholders would like to see improvements to academics at Kramer Middle School with a focus on culturally-relevant curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

## Survey and Group Discussion Detailed Findings

### **Shared Leadership:**

#### ***Survey Responses (n=14)***

- The majority of respondents felt positively about shared leadership at Kramer Middle School.
- 92.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school asks about their opinions regarding decisions made at the school (Figure C).

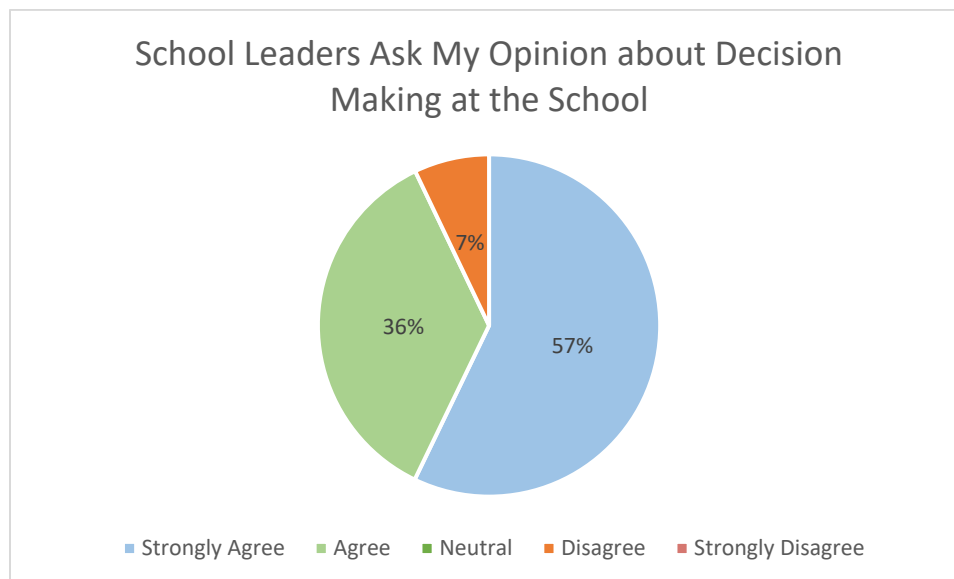


Figure C. Responses regarding shared leadership at Kramer Middle School.

### ***Group Discussion Responses***

- Parents want to ensure that the decision-making process includes people that are familiar with community needs.
- The school should implement a paid board of parents to guide school decisions.

## Community Voices

*"We need parents to collaborate with [decision makers]. Folks that are making the decisions don't have kids in this neighborhood...and don't know what's really going on." -Kramer Parent*

## Engagement:

### Survey Responses (n=14)

- The majority of respondents felt positively about Kramer Middle School's engagement practices.
- 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school engages regularly with all members of its community, including staff, families, and students. 29% of respondents feel neutral about this (Figure D).
- In addition, 71.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel welcome and connected to the school community. Yet, 14.3% of respondents strongly disagreed.

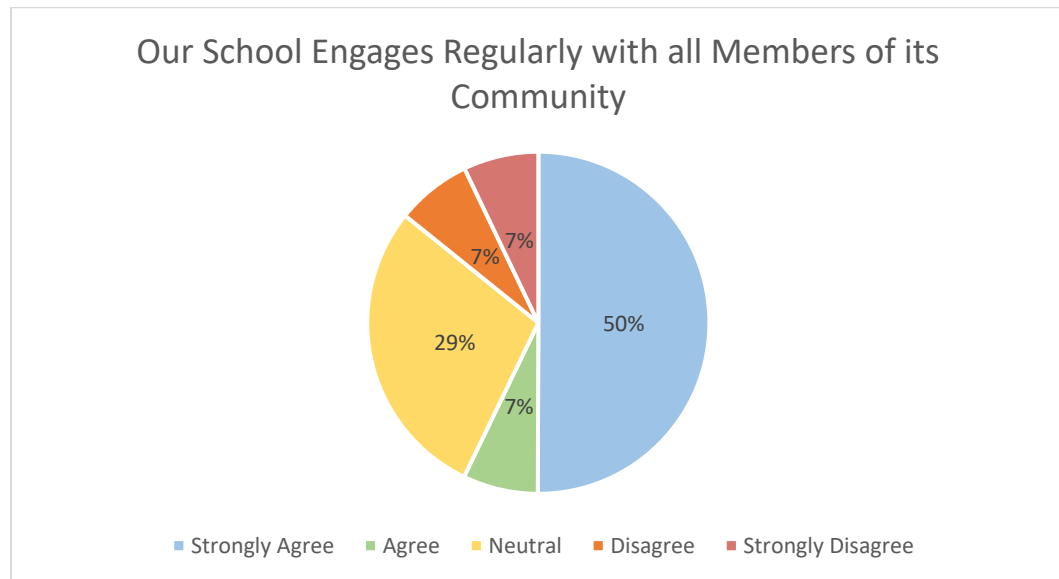


Figure D. Responses regarding engagement at Kramer Middle School.

## Group Discussion Responses

- Parents and teachers have good channels of communication.
- Home-visits, when utilized, are impactful, but are done too infrequently.

## Community Voices

*"Every day the staff here, the teachers here are calling and connecting with me." -Kramer Parent*

## Culture of Achievement:

### Survey Responses (n=14)

- The majority of respondents felt neutral or positively about Kramer Middle School's Culture of Achievement.
- While 50% of respondents felt neutral, 41.7% agreed or strongly agreed that students, staff and families took pride in Kramer Middle School. Only 8.3% of respondents disagreed (Figure E).
- While over 54.5% of respondents felt neutral, almost half (45.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students and staff had strong relationships.

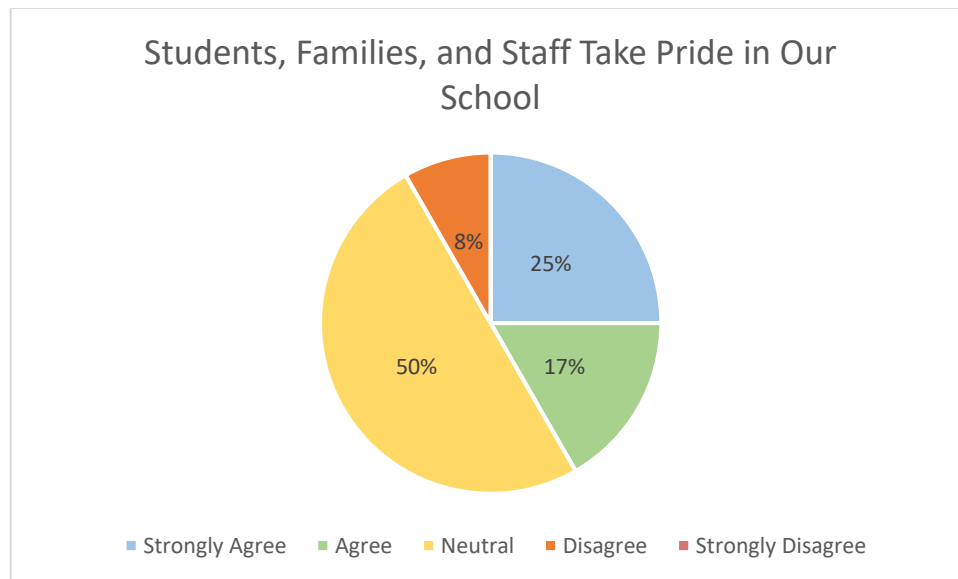


Figure E. Responses regarding culture of achievement at Kramer Middle School.

### Group Discussion Responses

- Extra-curriculars that engage students' talents help them feel confident and purposeful. Yet, there are not enough extra-curricular opportunities.

### Community Voices

*"Running track has helped me feel more confident."* -Kramer Student

*"We need more tutors and mentors in here to get those [test score] numbers up."* -Kramer Parent

## Academics:

### Survey Responses (n=14)

- Responses regarding academics at Kramer Middle School varied across the board. (Figure F, Figure G).
- Half of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that students have the appropriate supports for learning, whereas 50% disagreed (Figure F).
- Half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students felt challenged at school yet, 41.7% disagreed (Figure G).
- In addition, 58.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students at Kramer Middle School were excited about learning. A quarter of respondents disagreed.

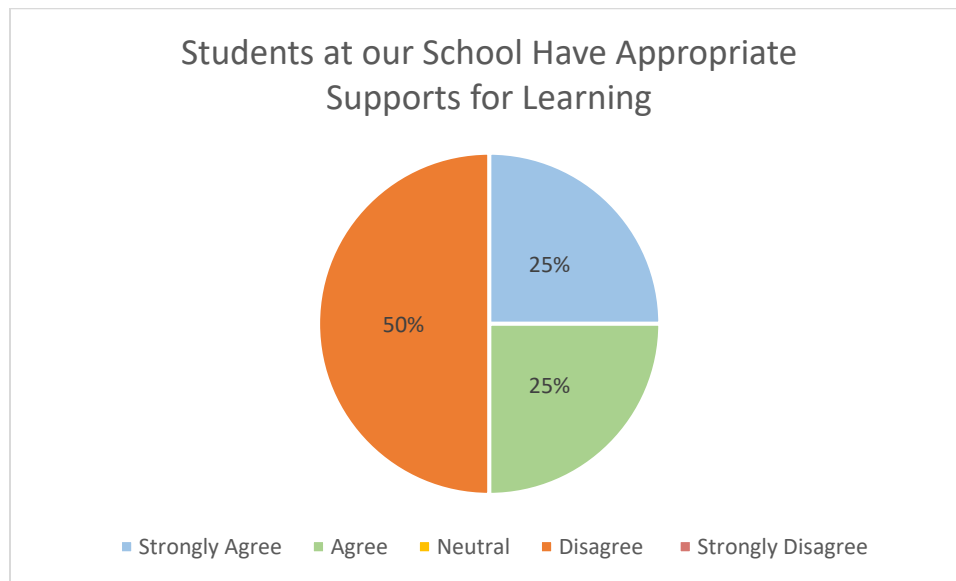


Figure F. Responses regarding academics at Kramer Middle School.

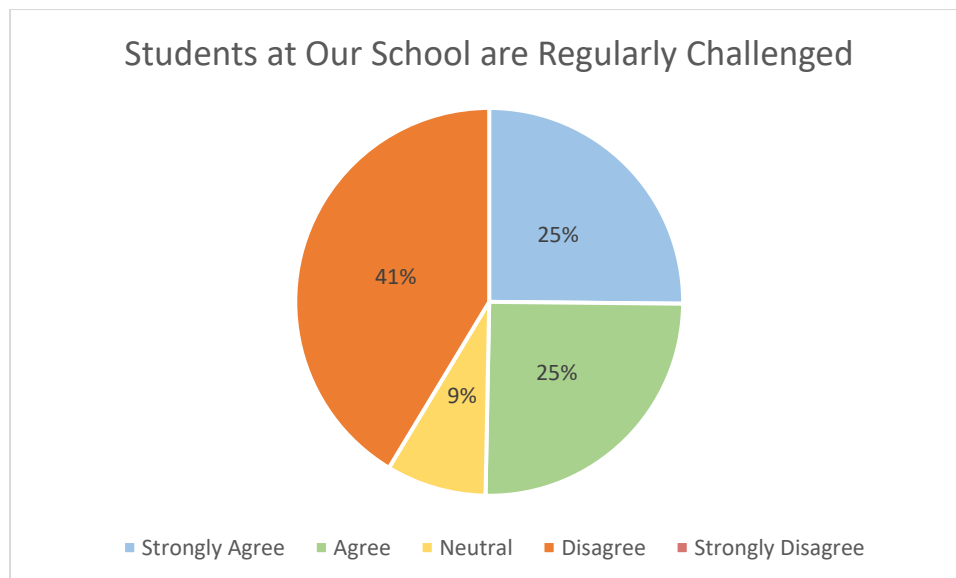


Figure G. Responses regarding academics at Kramer Middle School.

### Group Discussion Responses

- Integrating technology and increasing technology access would greatly benefit students by keeping them engaged and teaching them applicable skills to be prepared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Incoming students (sixth graders) often struggle with the transition from elementary to middle school.
- Parents want more emphasis on health and wellness in the curriculum.
- Students benefit greatly from the City Year programs at the school, especially in regard to assistance with homework and tutoring.

### Community Voices

*“The lack of tech is a huge setback. I know my son would excel more if there was more technology here.” - Kramer Parent*

### Equity:

#### Survey Responses (n=14)

- The majority of respondents felt positively about Kramer Middle School in regard to Equity.
- 58.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Kramer students were prepared to succeed in college, career, and beyond. A quarter of respondents disagreed (Figure H).
- In addition, 72.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Kramer Middle School prioritizes students that are the farthest from opportunity. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

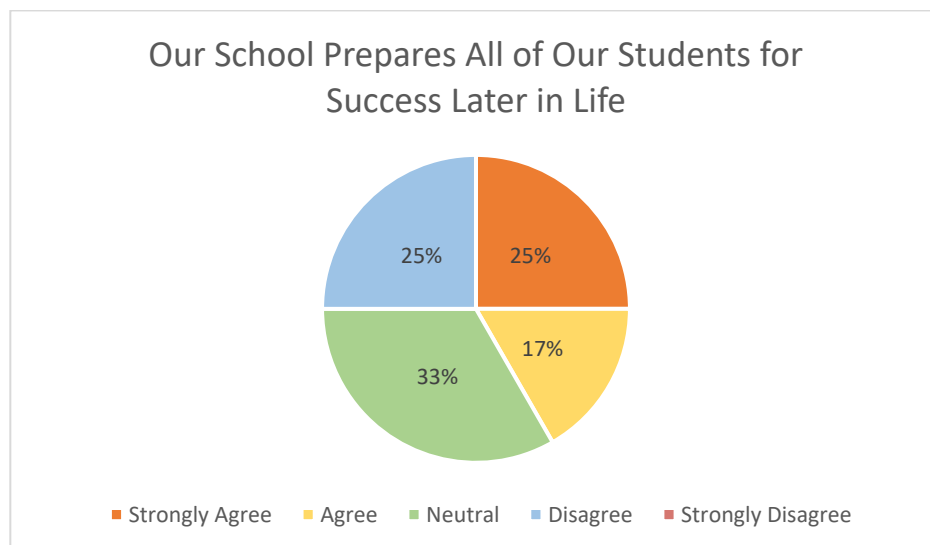


Figure H. Responses regarding equity at Kramer Middle School.

### Group Discussion Responses

- There needs to be more of an emphasis on culture, race, heritage, and history in the curriculum in order to instill a sense of pride and purpose in students.
- Students face struggles at home that affect them in school.

### Community Voices

*“Kids can’t be their best if home is falling apart.” -Kramer Parent*

## Appendix A

### Kramer Middle School Community Feedback Session Discussion Questions

**Directions:** The questions below are intended to start a conversation and to help us get input on the five focus areas of school transformation. There are no right or wrong answers - we want to know what you believe will move us forward as a school community!

- **Academics:**
  - When is learning the most fun for your child?
  - What areas is your child doing well in, and what is the reason they are able to succeed in that area? This could be a particular class, a skill, a character trait, etc.
  - What do you like about instruction at our school? What else what would you like to see?
- **Equity**
  - How is your child is being set up for success later in life? Why or why not?
  - How are your child's unique needs being met?
- **Culture of Achievement:**
  - Describe your school in two words. What are they and why?
  - When is your child most excited about or proud of the school? What makes you love a school? Why?
  - Are there opportunities, programs, or initiatives that are successful? What others would you like us to consider?
  - If you were to attend this school for a day, what would you want to experience? To see? To hear?
- **Shared Leadership:**
  - How has your school asked for your thoughts or opinions about school decisions? What came out of that conversation? How was your input included?
  - When do you feel most heard? Who do you trust to listen to and act on your concerns?
  - How would you like to be engaged in decision-making at the school as we work together to make changes?
- **Engagement:**
  - When do you feel most welcomed or connected to the school? Is there a person who makes you feel that way? A program?
  - What does strong engagement between the parents and teachers look like to you?
  - What partnerships or programs at the school are successful? (List of examples)
- **Overall**
  - All of these areas are important. Which do you think is the MOST important to prioritize? Which focus area do you think will allow your school to see the biggest gains?



## Appendix B

### 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?

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**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?

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**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**?

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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.**

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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.

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**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.

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

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**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

**If you are/have a student at the school, what grade are you/they in? Check all that apply.**

☐ PreK 3      ☐ First Grade      ☐ Fourth Grade      ☐ Seventh Grade      ☐ Tenth Grade  
☐ PreK 4      ☐ Second Grade      ☐ Fifth Grade      ☐ Eighth Grade      ☐ Eleventh Grade  
☐ Kindergarten      ☐ Third Grade      ☐ Sixth Grade      ☐ Ninth Grade      ☐ Twelfth Grade

## Appendix C

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.	35.7%	42.9%	14.3%	7.1%	0%
School leaders ask my opinion about decisions made at the school.	35.7%	57.1%	0%	7.1%	0%
ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Our school has made me feel welcome and connected to our school community.	35.7%	35.7%	14.3%	0%	14.3%
Our school engages regularly with all members of its community including staff, students, and families.	50%	7.1%	28.6%	7.1%	7.1%
CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Students and staff have strong relationships at our school.	27.3%	18.2%	54.5%	0%	0%
Students, families, and staff take pride in our school.	25%	16.7%	50%	8.3%	0%
ACADEMICS: STATEMENTS					
Students at our school have appropriate supports for learning.	25%	25%	0%	50%	0%
Students at our school are regularly challenged.	25%	25%	8.3%	41.7%	0%
Students at our school are excited about learning.	25%	33.3%	16.7%	25%	0%
EQUITY: STATEMENTS					
Our school prepares all of our students for success later in life, in both college and careers.	25%	33.3%	16.7%	25%	0%
Our school prioritizes the students that are the furthest from opportunities.	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%	0%	0%