Langley Elementary 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 Langley Elementary 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

Group Discussion Methodology

In order to get robust feedback from the Langley Elementary 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 Langley Elementary School in a group discussion. During the community feedback session, participants **(14 family members)** shared 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

A total of 25 surveys were collected from the Langley Elementary School community between January 31, 2019 and February 15, 2019. Surveys were administered at the community feedback session, as well as through other various channels, including email and school outreach. Twenty surveys were collected at the in-person community feedback session, and five were collected online. All known respondents were family members (Figure A). In addition, the respondents were associated with students across a variety of grade levels (Figure B). The survey can be found in Appendix B.
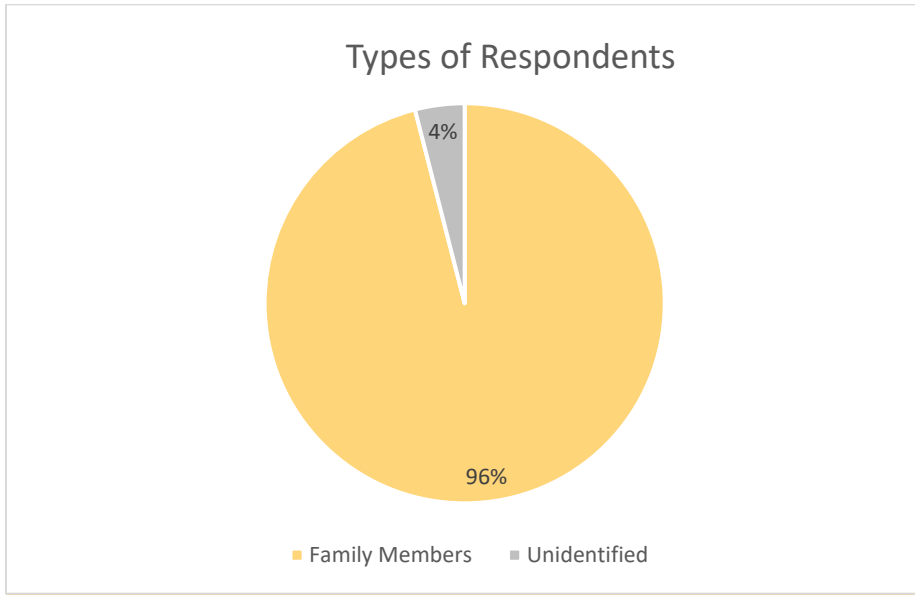
Types of Respondents

4%

96%

■ Family Members ■ Unidentified

Figure A. Types of stakeholders that took Langley Elementary School's survey.

Grade Levels Associated with Respondents

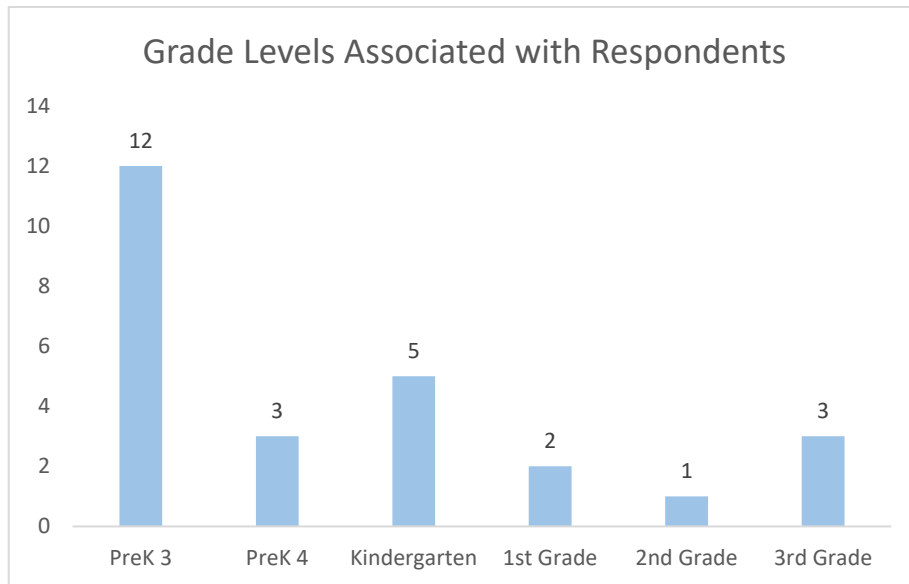| Grade	Count
PreK 3	12
PreK 4	3
Kindergarten	5
1st Grade	2
2nd Grade	1
3rd Grade	3

Figure B. Student grade levels associated with survey respondents.

Report Note

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 or response from the open-ended questions on the survey.

Key Findings

Stakeholders feel positively about shared leadership at Langley Elementary School, but many stated they would like for family and parent feedback opportunities to be more frequent and accessible.

Under engagement, stakeholders would like for there to be a focus on regular communication between staff and families at the school.

Equity was a top priority area for the school. Stakeholders would like to see more supports for at-risk and special needs students.

Survey and Group Discussion Detailed Findings

Shared Leadership:

Survey Responses (n=25)
- The majority of respondents felt positively about shared leadership at Langley Elementary.
- When asked to rank topic areas from most important to least important, almost half the respondents (41.67%) ranked shared leadership as their least important priority.
- 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that school the school asks about their opinions regarding decisions made at the school (Figure C).
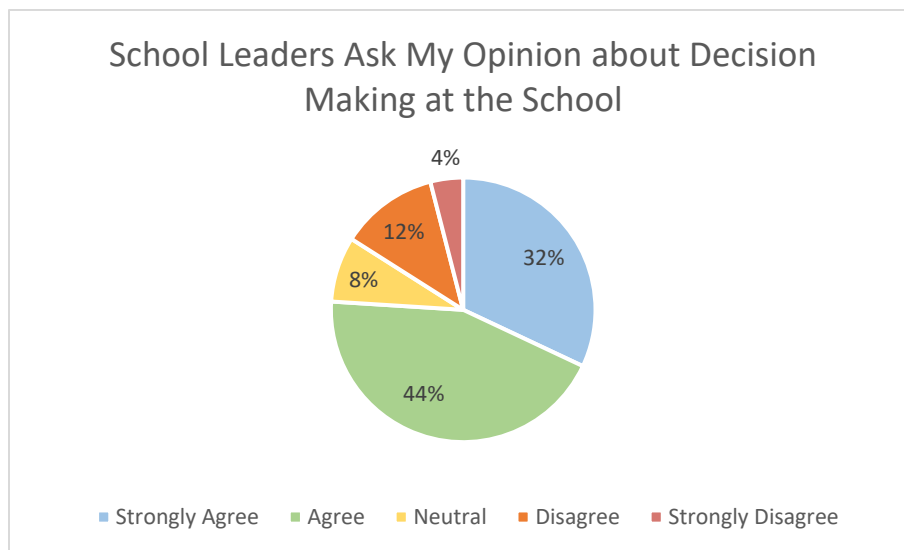

Figure C. Responses regarding shared leadership at Langley Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Parents are the ones who often initiate communication and start programs within the school.
- There are opportunities for parent voices to be heard, but they are not always accessible because some parents aren't able to attend due to work schedules or other conflicts.

Community Voices

"There's a lot going on, but we [parents] usually have to ask. We get responses, but we have to make the first move."- Langley Parents

"I find it's a challenge for families to attend a bunch of events. There's a lot going on. [The school] tries to do things on weekends and after school, which is helpful. But I wonder if there could be more virtual events where parents could voice their opinions. I don't think we get as much diversity [in input] as we want." – Langley Parents

Engagement:

Survey Responses (n=25)
- The majority of respondents felt positively about Langley Elementary School's engagement practices.
- 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school engages regularly with all members of its community, including staff, families, and students (Figure D).
- In addition, 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcomed and connected to the school community.
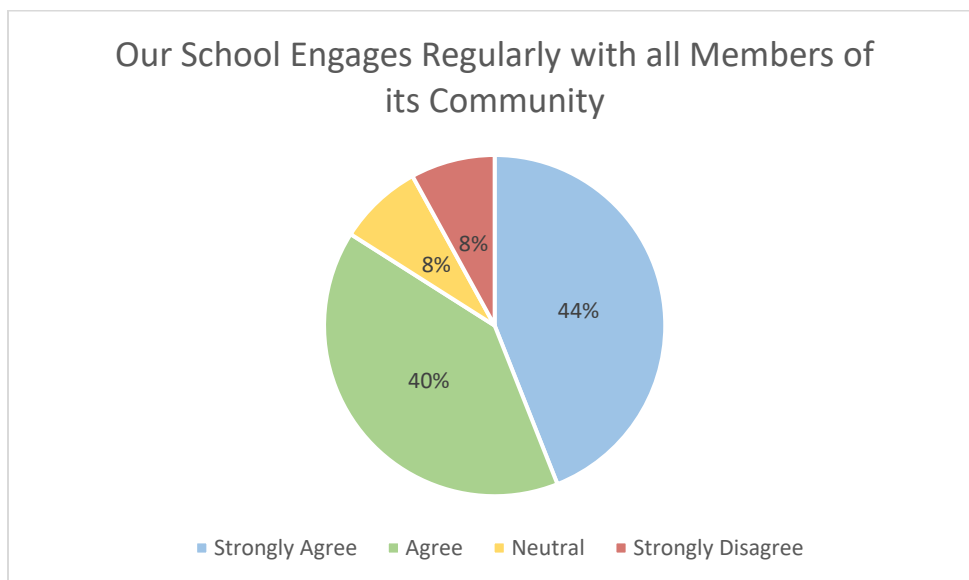

Our School Engages Regularly with all Members of its Community

- 44% Strongly Agree
- 40% Agree
- 8% Neutral
- 8% Strongly Disagree

Figure D. Responses regarding engagement at Langley Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses
- A uniform stream of communication between school staff/teachers and families would benefit teachers, parents, and students.
- Frequent updates about schedules, academic testing, and other milestones would help families support their students.

Community Voices

"This type [group discussion] of communication is ideal. Right now, my child's teacher and I text a lot, and we have open communication. But if everyone is doing this, I don't know how taxing this would be for the teacher. This is where an app would work well." -Langley Parent

Culture of Achievement:

Survey Responses (n=25)

- The majority of respondents felt positively about Langley Elementary School's Culture of Achievement.
- 83.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students, staff and families took pride in Langley Elementary School.
- In addition, 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students and staff have strong relationships at the school (Figure E).
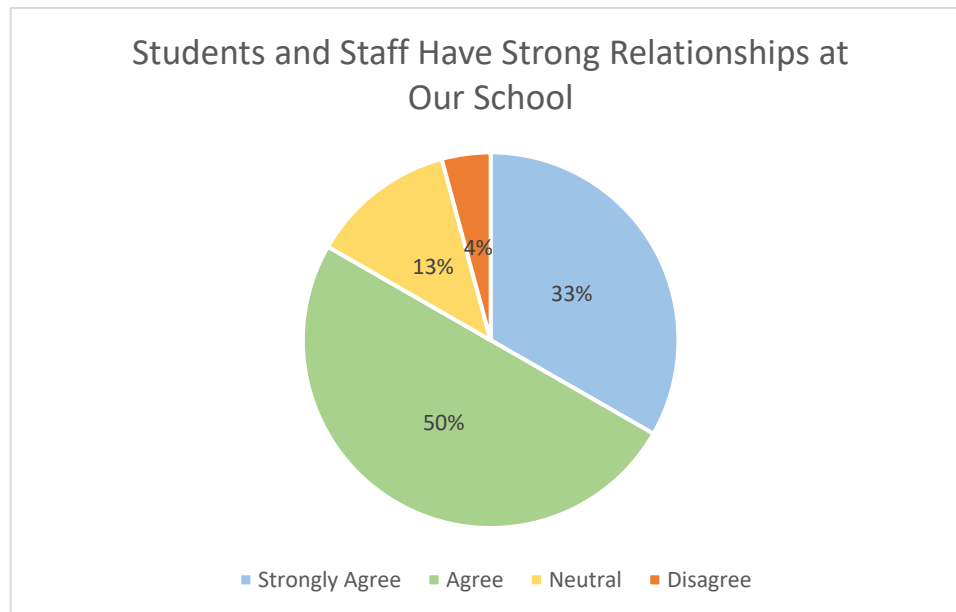

Students and Staff Have Strong Relationships at Our School

- 33% Strongly Agree
- 50% Agree
- 13% Neutral
- 4% Disagree

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

Figure E. Responses regarding culture of achievement at Langley Elementary School.

Groups Discussion Responses

- Parents want more positive behavior reinforcement systems to improve attitude and achievement.
- There is a need for increasing partnerships with educational organization and museums to provide a more engaging curriculum.
- There is a welcoming environment that allows parents to ask questions.

Community Voices

"We need a change in the culture of discipline. In terms of achievement, we have this narrative that our low-rating is because of fourth and fifth graders, and they have poor instruction. Those kids need support and enrichment programs." -Langley Parent

"I would love to see partnerships. A lot of schools do that and it's great. The Smithsonian provides partnerships. We can't afford to bring in performers, but kids love that. It can be really influential. Like, maybe kids will want to be a scientist because someone dressed up as a scientist comes in for the day."-Langley Parent

Academics:

Survey Responses (n=25)

- The majority of respondents felt positively about academics at Langley Elementary School.
- 91.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students at the school were excited about learning. No respondents strongly disagreed (Figure F).
- 83.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students have the appropriate supports for learning. No respondents strongly disagreed.
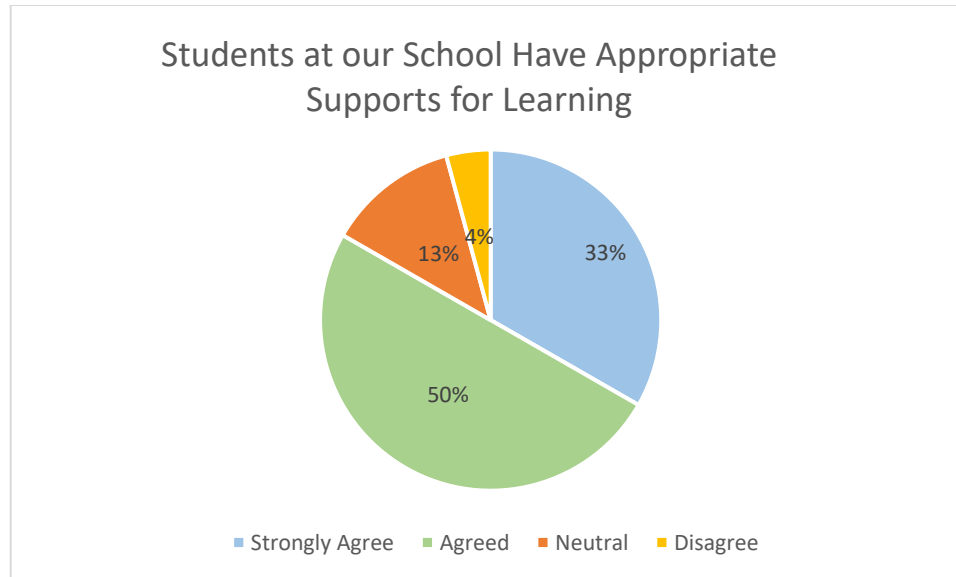
Students at our School Have Appropriate Supports for Learning

Strongly Agree	Agreed	Neutral	Disagree

33% · 50% · 13% · 4%

Figure F. Responses regarding academics at Langley Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Objectives and milestones are clear to students and parents, and students feel supported in the classroom so that they can achieve these goals.
- More tutoring and afterschool supports are need for students who do not have homework support.
- More programming and supports for advanced students are needed.

Community Voices

"My child is in third grade, and they're getting into complex homework, and sometimes I don't know how to help. Some of the English or reading homework, I need to google. If I'm struggling to help my child, how do the other high needs families feel? Homework is important, but what if families aren't equipped to help?" -Langley Parent

Equity:

Survey Responses (n=25)

- Responses regarding equity at Langley Elementary School varied across the board.
- Almost half the respondents (41.67%) ranked equity as their most important priority, and almost half the respondents (41.67%) ranked equity as their least important priority
- While 56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school prioritized students that are the farthest from opportunity, 35% of respondents felt neutral (Figure G).
- 62.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Langley Elementary School prepares all students for success later in life.
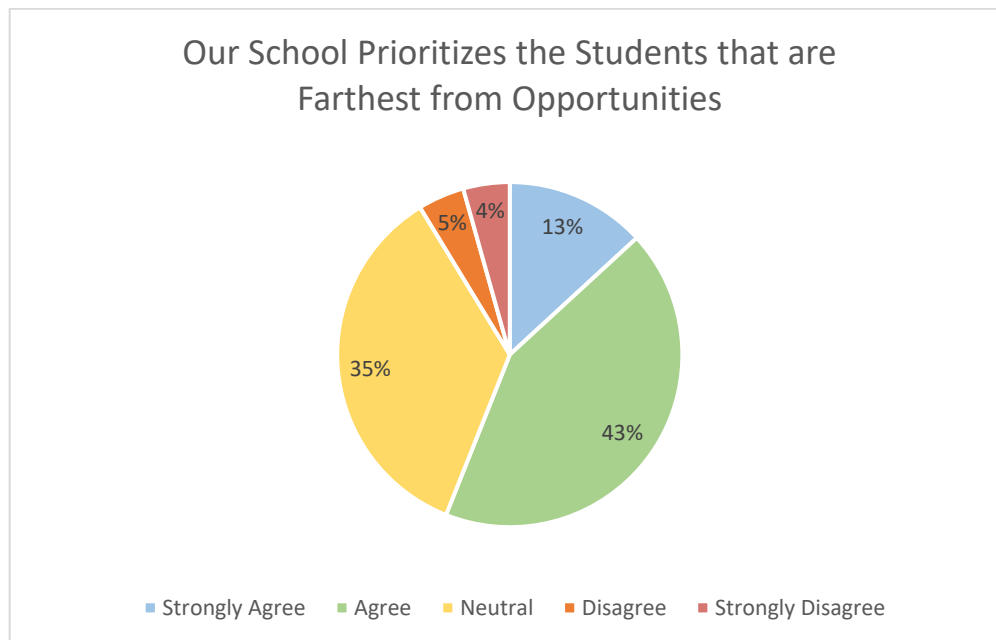

Figure G. Responses regarding equity at Langley Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- There are different at-risk populations (special needs, English Language Learners, students experiencing homelessness, low-income) that need individualized funding and support. The diverse needs are these students are not currently being met.

Community Voices

"I would say we have a very large high needs population. It gets hard for our administration to meet all their needs. We have so many at-risk and special needs kids. If DCPS is going to put all those kids in this school, we need more resources. We have the most special needs kids in DCPS, and we should have an administrator specifically for special needs kids. And that should come out of the DCPS budget, not our budget. If we're always putting our attention towards special needs kids, how can we help our homeless kids? And all our other students who need other supports?" -Langley Parent

Appendix A

Langley Elementary 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?

_____

_____

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

Appendix C

Rank the following improvement focus areas from most important to least important. *Respondents ranked 1-5 (1=high, 5=low).*					
Topic	Ranked as Priority #1	Ranked as Priority #2	Ranked as Priority #3	Ranked as Priority #4	Ranked as Priority #5
Shared Leadership	8.33%	8.33%	16.17%	25.00%	41.67%
Engagement	8.33%	33.33%	0.00%	58.33%	0.00%
Culture of Achievement	33.33%	33.33%	25.00%	0.00%	8.33%
Academics	8.33%	25.00%	58.33%	0.00%	8.33%
Equity	41.67%	0.00%	0.00%	16.66%	41.67 %

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.	44%	36%	4%	8%	8%
School leaders ask my opinion about decisions made at the school.	32%	44%	8%	12%	1%
ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Our school has made me feel welcome and connected to our school community.	76%	12%	1%	0%	8%
Our school engages regularly with all members of its community including staff, students, and families.	44%	40%	8%	0%	8%
CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Students and staff have strong relationships at our school.	56%	28%	4%	4%	8%
Students, families, and staff take pride in our school.	41.7%	41.7%	12.5%	8%	4.2%
ACADEMICS: STATEMENTS					
Students at our school have appropriate supports for learning.	33.3%	50%	12.5%	4.2%	0%
Students at our school are regularly challenged.	25%	41.7%	25%	8.3%	0%
Students at our school are excited about learning.	25%	66.7%	0%	8.3%	0%
EQUITY: STATEMENTS					
Our school prepares all of our students for success later in life, in both college and careers.	33.3%	29.2%	20.8%	8.3%	8.3%
Our school prioritizes the students that are the furthest from opportunities.	13%	43.5%	34.8%	4.3%	4.3%