

Moten 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 Moten 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 Moten 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 Moten Elementary School in a group discussion. During the community feedback session, **14 participants (nine teachers, five staff)** 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 and points that was developed in partnership with DCPS, PAVE, and the school principal. The group discussion questions can be found in Appendix A.

Survey Methodology

A total of 12 surveys were collected from the Moten Elementary School community between February 4, 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. Eleven surveys were collected at the in-person community feedback session and one was collected online. The majority of the respondents were teachers, and there were no responses from family members. (Figure A). There was insufficient data regarding the student grade levels that respondents were associated with. The survey can be found in Appendix B.

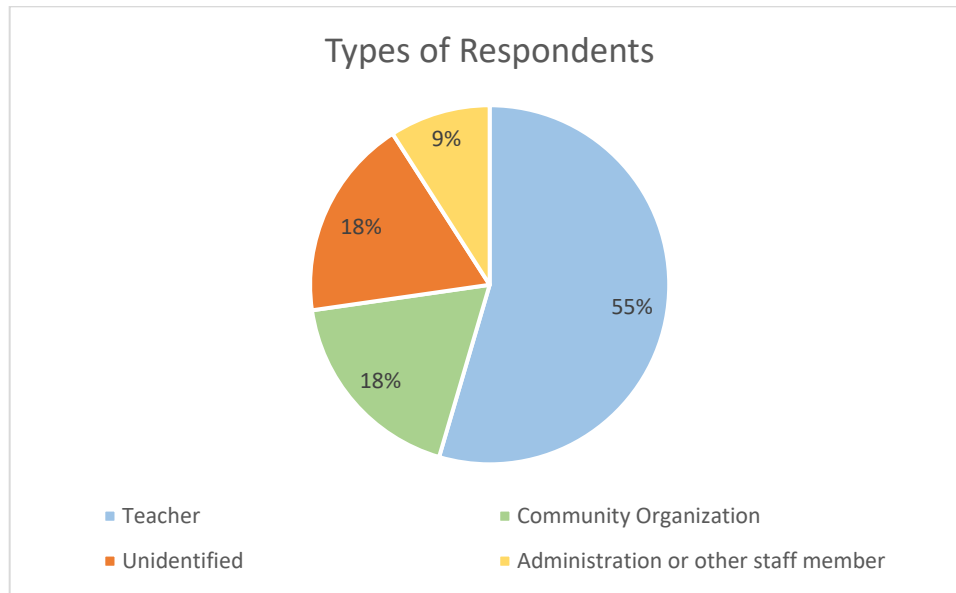


Figure A. Types of stakeholders that took Moten Elementary School's survey.

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

Culture of achievement was a top priority area at Moten Elementary School. Stakeholders noted the need for positive reinforcements for students, as well as enrichment programs to increase student engagement.

Under equity, stakeholders wanted a focus on increased mental health supports and social-emotional learning. Stakeholders also want to see more targeted supports for students with special needs and students who are struggling academically.

Under shared leadership, stakeholders noted the need for a clear system of communication between the school and families, as well as for more opportunities for the school community to provide feedback.

Survey and Group Discussion Detailed Findings

Shared Leadership:

Survey Responses (n=12)

- The majority of respondents felt negatively about shared leadership at Moten Elementary School.
- The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (88.9%) that Moten Elementary School included the voices of students, families, and staff in their decision-making process.
- The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (60%) that school leaders asked their opinion about decisions made at the school. 30% of respondents felt neutral, and 10% of respondents agreed (Figure B).

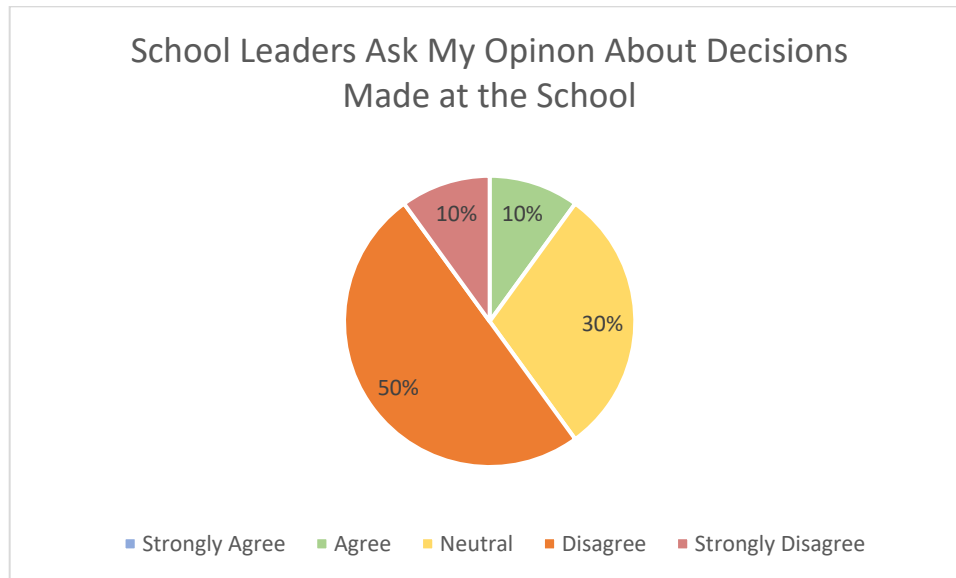


Figure B. Responses regarding shared leadership at Moten Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Minimal input from teachers is considered when high-level, school-wide decisions are made.
- Teachers and staff want a variety of feedback sessions and meetings (size, time, structure) to ensure that everyone's voices are heard.
- While grade level collaboration and communication is strong, teachers and staff want more regular and detailed communication from administration about school-wide updates or changes that are being made.

Community Voices

"I think that sometimes people are asked for their opinions, and it seems like we're open, but it never goes past the suggestions. You can say what you want to say, but it ends there. And that makes me feel frustrated. Why wouldn't [the school] care about the people who have been a part of this school [and] part of this community?" -Moten Teacher

Engagement:

Survey Responses (n=12)

- The responses regarding engagement at Moten Elementary School varied.
- More than half (54.4%) of respondents agreed that the school made them feel welcome and connected the school community. No respondents strongly agreed. 36.4% felt neutral, 8.1% disagreed, no respondents strongly disagreed.
- 18.2% of respondents agreed that the school regularly engages with all members of its community, including staff, students, and families. No respondents strongly agreed. 45.5% of respondents felt neutral, and 36.4% of respondents disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed (Figure C).

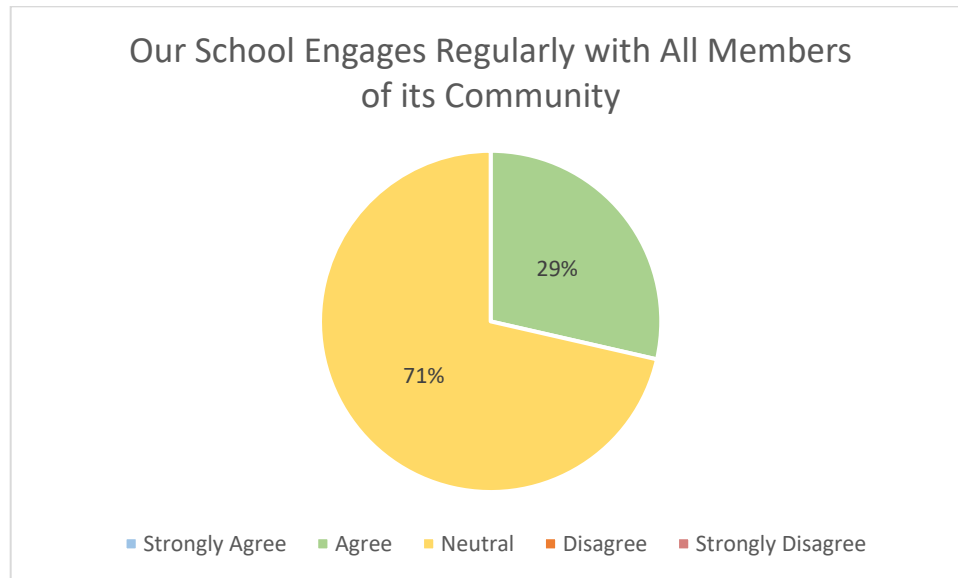


Figure C. Responses regarding engagement at Moten Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- There is a need to build trusted relationships between parents and teachers in order to increase engagement.
- City Year has greatly increased student engagement.
- Structures to encourage consistent and frequent communication between teachers and families would increase family engagement and help families be more involved with their child's progress.

Community Voices

"[Because of] City Year, I've seen a really significant change in their relationships with students. They really try to understand what is going on. They do a lot of one-on-ones. They have taken ownership of the student and teacher relationship." -Moten Teacher

"I did some pre-registration for an expungement fair. I did a resume and job workshop that was heavily attended. When it feels targeted, parents come out. And we need to host things when families are likely to be available." -Moten Teacher

Culture of Achievement:

Survey Responses (n=12)

- The response regarding culture of achievement at Moten Elementary School varied greatly.
- Almost half (45.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students and staff have strong relationships at the school. 27.3% disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed.
- The majority of respondents (63.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that students, families, and staff take pride in Moten Elementary School. Only 9.1% of respondents agreed, and no respondents strongly agreed (Figure D).

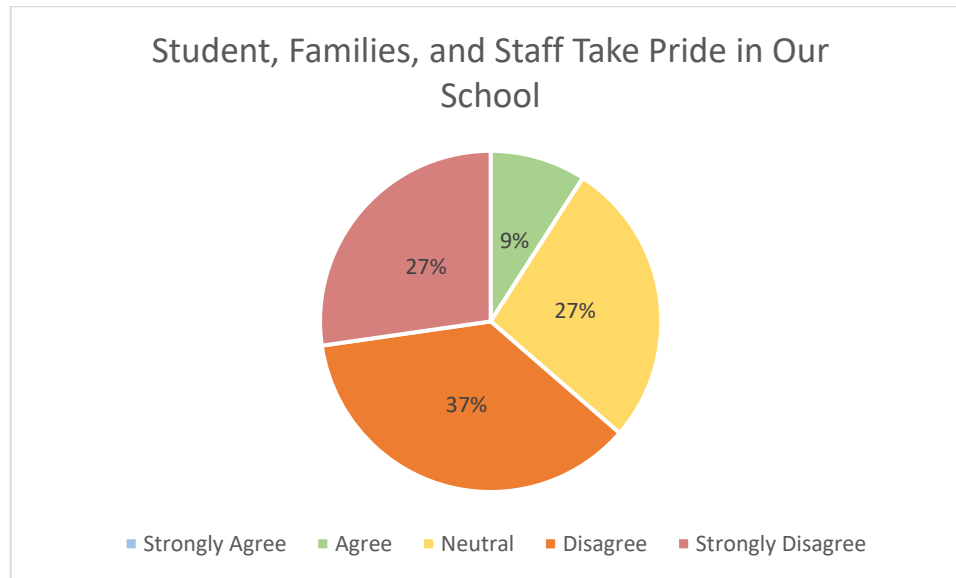


Figure D. Responses regarding culture of achievement at Moten Elementary School.

Groups Discussion Responses

- Positive behavior reinforcement is essential to grow student confidence and student success.
- Behavioral issues often interfere with building a positive school culture.
- Students need to be instilled with a sense of pride, which when done, shows in their achievement and enthusiasm.

Community Voices

“Kids are very excited when they can actually access the work. They love showing off something when they’ve done it, and when they can participate.” -Moten Teacher

“Because this school is really in high need for behavior [changes], we need two levels of support: deal with this behavior immediately and also the [long-term] behavioral health piece. Because behavior is such a high need, people mix up the roles of mental health staff.” -Moten Staff

Academics:

Survey Responses (n=12)

- The majority of respondents felt negatively about academics at Moten Elementary School.
- 63.6% of respondents disagreed that students had appropriate supports for learning at Moten Elementary School. 27.3% agreed, and 9.1% respondents indicated that they felt neutral. No respondents strongly agreed or strongly disagreed.
- 54.4% of respondents disagreed that students at the school are regularly challenged, and 27.3% agreed or strongly agreed. No respondents strongly disagreed (Figure E).
- The majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated that they felt neutral regarding students at the school being excited about learning. 36.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. No respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

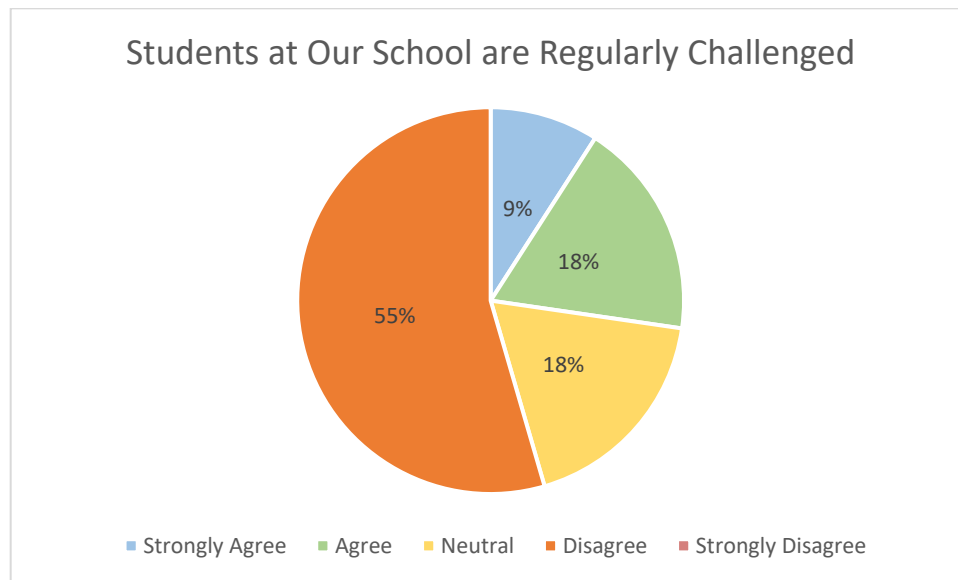


Figure E. Responses regarding academics at Moten Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Incorporating more social emotional learning would benefit students and staff.
- Teachers, especially newer teachers, need more training in order to support students.

Community Voices

"If you have a bunch of young teachers, they need different supports. Over 75% of our teachers are under five years. Are they prepared for what they're in?" -Moten Staff

"We do restorative justice circles, which works for some students. We need a 'peace room' or mindfulness space on every floor." -Moten Teacher

Equity:

Survey Responses (n=12)

- The majority of respondents felt negatively about equity at Moten Elementary School.
- 90.9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school prepared all students for success later in life, in both college and careers (Figure F).
- Half of respondents (50%) disagreed that the school prioritized students that are the farthest from opportunities.

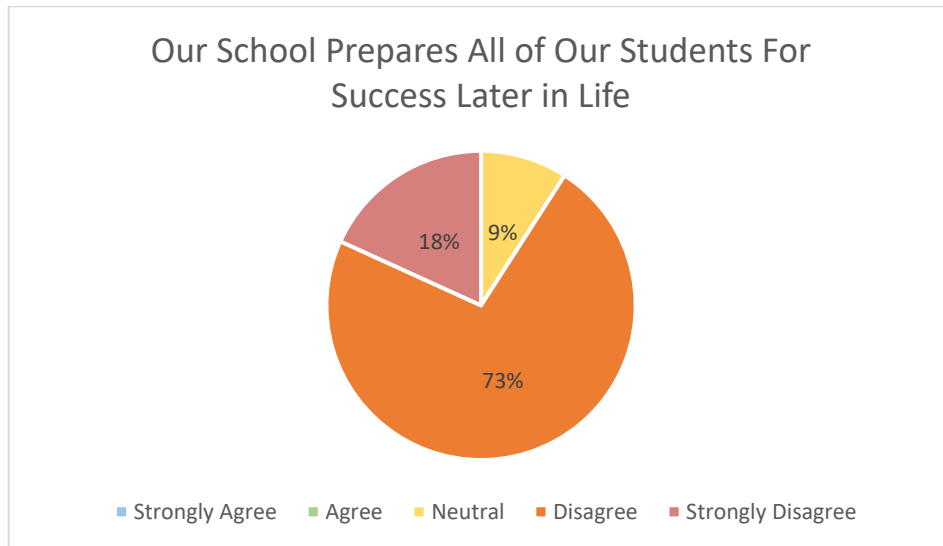


Figure F. Responses regarding equity at Moten Elementary School.

Group Discussion Responses

- Staff needs to set high academic standards for students to achieve their full potential. This is particularly important given the high numbers of at-risk students at the school.
- There needs to be more supports for special education students.

Community Voices

“Our special education students’ needs are not being met. Many of my students have IEPs and they’re not getting seen.” -Moten Teacher

“We are slacking on what we’re pushing [students] to do. I don’t think we challenge [them], we have a mindset that things are bad and that we’re trying to improve them. I am guilty of this too, but we don’t push our kids.” - Moten Teacher

Appendix A

Community Feedback Session Survey

Moten 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!

- **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?
- **Culture of Achievement**
 - What helps your child attend school on time? What supports could help your child attend school on time?
 - 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?
- **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?
- **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

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 C

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	33.33%	11.11%	11.11%	44.44%	0%
Engagement	0%	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%	11.11%
Culture of Achievement	44.44%	22.22%	22.22%	11.11%	0%
Academics	22.22%	33.33%	0%	0%	44.44%
Equity	0%	0%	33.33%	22.22%	44.44%

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.	0%	0%	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%
School leaders ask my opinion about decisions made at the school.	0%	10%	30%	50%	10%
ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Our school has made me feel welcome and connected to our school community.	0%	54.5%	36.4%	9.1%	0%
Our school engages regularly with all members of its community including staff, students, and families.	0%	18.2%	45.5%	36.4%	0%
CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT: STATEMENTS					
Students and staff have strong relationships at our school.	9.1%	36.4%	27.3%	27.3%	0%
Students, families, and staff take pride in our school.	0%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%
ACADEMICS: STATEMENTS					
Students at our school have appropriate supports for learning.	0%	27.3%	9.1%	63.6%	0%
Students at our school are regularly challenged.	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%	54.5%	0%
Students at our school are excited about learning.	0%	0%	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%
EQUITY: STATEMENTS					
Our school prepares all of our students for success later in life, in both college and careers.	0%	0%	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%
Our school prioritizes the students that are the furthest from opportunities.	0%	10%	40%	50%	0%

