



Open House on Citywide Family Council – June 18, 2018 Meeting Notes

- **Welcome** from Deputy Superintendent, Jeannine Durkin
- **Purpose** of the Open House: Generate a discussion about what we collectively want to see from a Citywide Family Council & Get your feedback about the issues and advocacy opportunities that you think will be important for this new citywide group.
 - *Idea: Create a mission statement and/or brief summary on what this group is about and why it matters; particularly important for recruiting additional members/attendees*
- **Existing Structures** for Family Engagement:
 - How do parents and family members currently share feedback and ask questions about their schools and the district as a whole?
 - Many parents don't give feedback, esp. new-comers & English learners
 - LPS website
 - Email
 - Calls
 - Attending school meetings
 - Facebook Parent Group
 - School Site Councils
 - School social events (food is a good incentive)
 - PTOs
 - Face to face/informal conversations
 - Google
 - CMAA & other community groups as liaisons
 - What parent groups already have a strong voice?
 - Note: it's not clear how much influence any of these groups actually have
 - School site councils (uneven)
 - Friends of Lowell High
 - Previous citywide parent council helped push feedback up the line
 - LEJA & MEJA (mass umbrella group)
 - SPED PAC
 - What makes them strong?
 - Organization matters regarding power/strength
 - Having community members strengthens group
 - Variety of opinions
 - Being "neutral", ie not having kids in the system helps
- **Individual Activity:** What issues are important for this Family Council to work on/address?
 - **College & Career Readiness:**
 - Cuts to career positions @ LHS
 - State of LHS → drawing families out

- Much better training, don't push out groups that are ready to help
 - Prepare kids for new economy (not all jobs require college & not all kids choose to go to college)
- Better co-op opportunities
 - Life readiness
- **Family & Community Involvement** – How do you get parents & community to be involved?
 - Spanish, Khmer, Vietnamese language events, reach out to all groups
 - Pasta suppers
 - Star parties
 - Ice cream socials
 - Back to School Night
 - Books for Bingo
 - Walk-a-thons
 - Holiday Bazaar
 - Reach out to neighborhoods
 - School officials & staff attend community events
 - Getting non-English speakers engaged & remain engaged
 - Culture
- **Diversity in Staffing & Cultural Competency**
 - School staffing – reach outside of the internal system and make more accessible
 - More trainings
 - Training for all staff in empowering all ethnic & social groups
 - Create pipeline for students of color to become teachers
 - Awareness of special ed. Services
- **Student Voice & Learning**
 - Tutoring
 - Practice on PCs/Macs/Chromebooks
 - To provide opps to take higher level courses, honors, high honors, AP etc
 - Explore coding at elementary schools & STEM in general
 - Student-centered approaches to teaching & learning
- **After School/Outside of School Opportunities**
 - School clubs> involvement with community
 - Communication & promotion of availability of opps
 - Lack of equity of offering between schools
 - Topics not taught in schools
 - Community partners are important
 - To expand school library hours
 - Sports & outdoor activities to start at earlier grades
 - More tutoring services
- **Logistics, Schedules, & Communications**
 - No busses at the high school level
 - Report cards
 - Parent teacher conferences
 - Guidance Counselors/student input
 - Electronic communication is key (email, text, blackboard, etc)
 - Recess, more opps to move bodies during the day

- Climbing structures should be available to all elementary school students
 - How to best communicate with parents
- **Early Childhood**
 - Full day
 - Transportation
 - Offer translations
 - Educate parents on how system works, translate
- **Social Emotional Learning**
 - Training for teachers to become aware
 - Teachers to cultivate social emotional growth in students
 - Training for teachers to recognize and report on mental health issues
 - Budgets cut drastically schools don't have PD to provide to teachers
- **Other**
 - Cuts to per pupil amount for each student
 - Special Ed expansion inclusion & training
- **Inclusion:** Who's not in the room who needs to be? Why is it important to bring in underrepresented voices? Are there underrepresented groups we want to make sure are included?
 - How do we get people (both families & school staff) to participate, knowing there are lots of barriers?
 - Parents who don't speak English
 - More stakeholders (community members, schools, real partnerships & communication btwn school staff & families/community members)
 - Diff. cultural backgrounds
 - NFI
 - *Ideas:*
 - share ideas from this group at other less frequent events
 - more email & social media communication
 - child care
 - vary time of day of mtgs.
 - Vary locations (not always downtown)
 - Needs of elementary, middle & high school vary
 - Topics that meet needs of diff. groups of parents
 - Transportation – can it be provided? Have meetings in comm. centers/neighborhoods
 - Use neighborhood & ethnic based orgs. to recruit participants
 - Broadcast meetings (maybe youtube) – could try Facebook live also (shut off comments)
- Provide parent info in their language
- Increase awareness of what exists currently for programs
- How to get info – where are the opps?
- Many students need additional support
- Integration of SEL practices into classroom & “grading”
- Parent access to Supt. & Asst. Supts (2-way flow of comm, Face to Face)

- It matters for superintendent to be present → can use external facilitation so school leaders can participate
- Supt attending sends a message that LPS central office believes family engagement matters
- Open Supt.'s office for mtgs too
- Ask local communities to recruit their own members for citywide family council
- Use parents liaisons
- Add accountability measures for participants
- Figure out which schools actually have site councils & advocate for schools to est. them
- Priority: Representation by school leaders (Supt & or school board) at meetings → consistency shows investment
- Also higher ed & religious reps
- **Other ideas:**
 - How do we do more/address these issues with less funding?
 - Can parents/community be part of the solution...change?
 - Need to update the school committee as we progress
- **Next Steps**
 - Debrief meeting Mon June 25th with Supt., Project LEARN & Your Voice Matters committee
 - Notes will be added to www.yourvoicematterslowell.org
 - Like Project LEARN on Facebook to stay informed: @ProjectLEARNLowell