



Strategic Planning Family Survey

Open-Ended Feedback Themes

Theme #1: Communication between families, school staff, and the district needs to be:

- Consistent
- Clear
- Reciprocal
- School-specific
- Preventive instead of reactionary

"I would love more opportunities to talk with teachers and administration at my kids' school. I feel the schools say they are welcoming and inviting to parents, but don't offer much for parents to come in and have a chance to talk with teachers and administration."

"I feel that the administration does not take time to build a positive relationship with kids/my son. The only interaction they have is always negative."

"I would like to see more opportunities for parents to be involved during the school day, for example, muffins with moms, donuts with dads, or other events that parents could attend."

Theme #2: School culture is impacted by discipline policies and procedures as well as how engaged and active the entire school community is in the learning process. School discipline policies and procedures should be:

- Reviewed and referenced at least quarterly to remind and reinforce the policies and procedures
- Clearly defined and executed consistently, including assigning responsibilities for the policies and procedures
- Updated with regard to the bullying policy if not being enforced appropriately
- Focused on utilizing trauma-informed practices in order to avoid disruptions to student learning
- Included in regular, quality training that is required for all staff who are not well versed in classroom/school management to enhance their skills in discipline and behavior management

"I wish our MPS school would offer staff and administrators (teacher sand counselors have been beyond lovely!) training on trauma and DEI issues (in ways that move beyond race to also include social class, mental health, sexuality, non-nuclear families, etc.). It doesn't take much funding to teach young students (many of whom are living in poverty and in tough home situations) in ways that reflect patience, kindness, and respect...I feel that unless this behavior-focused, deficit-based culture can be shifted, schools will not only be dealing with the results of kids who are living in trauma at home, but (re)inflicting harm and trauma at school as well. I think we start by making sure school staff are earning living wages and takin care of themselves, so they are not bringing their own struggle sand trauma into the schools."

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“The teachers, staff, and administrators are excellent. However, I am very concerned about the behavior of students at times. It seems that much of the teacher’s time is spent dealing with behavioral issues in the classroom instead of teaching. I know my son has been physically hurt by students in the classroom. His teacher was also hurt in the classroom and rushed to the hospital.”

“It would be very beneficial to be able to meet other parents in my child’s class. He always asks about playing with friends after school, but I can only ever meet the parents who pick their kid up after school (so no one whose kid takes the bus or stays after for CLC). A strong and engaged school community is not really possible if we don’t have a chance to meet each other.”

“Also, in the ‘what helps my student succeed – pick 5’ there was no ‘quality of relationships between teachers and students’ option. I actually think that is the most important and most valuable thing.”

Theme #3: School safety enhancements should focus on:

- Disseminating active shooter protocols in a clear manner to students and families
- Engaging law enforcement to protect school zones from reckless driving
- Providing more scrutiny regarding accessing buildings

“I think it’s pretty easy to get buzzed into the school. That scares the hell out of me in this day and age of daily mass shootings.”

Theme #4: Facilities enhancements should focus on:

- Cleanliness of buildings, especially pest and rodent control
- Bathroom upgrades and consistent stocking of supplies
- Health concerns related to a lack of AC and the presence of asbestos and lead paint
- Standardizing structural features to address inequities between schools
- Investing in recreational upgrades to sites, such adding sporting fields, outdoor play areas, pools, etc.

“Our school is over 100 years old and in need of a lot of updates in the older parts. I’m concerned with lead paint and asbestos.”

“The district needs to start giving attention and resources to high schools that aren’t the ‘good’ schools.”

Theme #5: Chronic staffing issues must be addressed to help alleviate many of the other issues mentioned in the survey. Staffing issues should be addressed by:

- Intentionally planning ways to enhance teacher retention
- Keeping classrooms staffed appropriately given the size of them
- Streamlining the hiring process with other districts

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- Offering pay commensurate with other districts and the rising cost of living
- Adequately supplying teachers with materials
- Investing in school support staff to alleviate the burden of classroom teachers
- Consolidating schools

“Every classroom, especially in early elementary MUST have a full-time assistant. Every school building should have its own social worker, psychologist and counselor (even separate campuses). All schools and staff need intervention specialists, curriculum implementers, teacher coaches, and SEL specialists. All schools should have a full administration. All schools should have a full-time nurse. It’s time to seriously consider the allocation of funds and be sure students are receiving all necessary supports so they can be successful.”

“All schools should have a dedicated, trained and credentialed librarian whose job is not in jeopardy every year. All schools should have a fully dedicated, trained, and credentialed social worker and/or psychologist. The substitute and paraprofessional shortage situation in MPS is a huge problem that should be addressed immediately... I know that there are larger systemic factors at play here, but I would like to see the district take creative and aggressive action on this issue.”

“I know of several people in the Milwaukee community with the proper credentials who have applied for teaching positions with MPS but have received no follow up, phone calls, letters, or any form of correspondence...It is unacceptable that individuals who desire to educate children in Milwaukee Public Schools are unable to do so because of delays or mishaps related to the hiring process. There is a disconnect with human resources which ultimately affects the children of MPS, and this district has no option other than to do better.”

Theme #6: Schedule changes should reflect best practices and limit the logistical challenges that families might face getting all of their students to different schools. This includes:

- Having start times for all schools between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m.
- Having one calendar that aligns with the traditional school year
- Communicating busing changes in real time to families (running late, not arriving, etc.)
- Not allowing students to suffer consequences from late/no-show buses

“This was already asked, but I strongly support all schools moving to one calendar. Since there are too many schools without AC, I support the traditional calendar.”

“Please do not make the kids and staff roast in the school with early start schedule. They are not learning, functioning, the kids come home unwell, unable to do activities after school. It isn’t safe for my child and health conditions and we will be forced to change schools.”

“School start time – The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends school start times of 8:30 or later to give children the appropriate amount of sleep that is crucial for learning and development. So why then is our school start time 7:35? There is so much data that is readily available that states all of the benefits of later start times for children. Alas, this seems to fall on deaf ears so this survey is great, but parents would like to see



action. Follow the data, not the bussing schedules. Follow the lead of other districts so our children can actually have a full three months of summer.”

“I just want to reiterate how disappointed I have been in the bussing. When voting for the referendum, we were promised better service and better routes. Not only has our children’s bus route been inconsistent for pick-up time, they are getting picked up earlier than ever.

“7:20am start time is painful for families. School is out around 2:30 and as working parents it requires the need for after care. It has been very difficult for many families to find aftercare and the space is limited. If these are going to be the hours chosen, it is then critical that the school provide after care for ALL students that apply. So many people were turned away this year due to limited staff.”

Theme #7: Curricular and instructional enhancements need to focus on the following:

- More diverse postsecondary options, including training and planning for those options
- Life skills courses or including them in current courses (financial literacy, home economics, shop, etc.)
- More arts education opportunities at all grade levels
- Training teachers on Universal Design for Learning to allow for remedial and extension activities in all instructional settings
- Demonstrating high expectations with more academic rigor

“How does MPS plan to better support students at grade level to continue making academic progress? A significant amount of teacher time and funding is always used to try to move lower performing students to proficiency (WIN time, small group interventions, 1-1 interventions, etc.). How does MPS support proficient students moving to highly proficient or advanced?”

“They should invest more in the program for children with special education, something more appropriate for them, more individualized help, more teachers prepared to teach our children who need them.”

“I would like to see the school provide more culturally based subjects, particularly African American history, as the school and most of the students that attend are African American.”

“Standards based grading needs to be re-examined to determine the effectiveness of it and the impact on student growth and development. It is my experience that many teachers struggle to implement standards-based grading correctly and effectively.”

Theme #8: Expand the extracurricular offerings to include:

- Before- and after-school programming
- Equitable programming across schools, including family events, sports, clubs, and camps
- Expanded tutoring options



“They need to bring back the before and after school program for school-age kids. We can barely afford the daycare we have. The school program was affordable and convenient.”

“CLC and other after school activities were a vital part of previous generations growth in social skills, individual realization, and fun! It’s sad this has been taken away almost citywide in Milwaukee.”

Theme #9: Improvements to the food program, including:

- Offering a healthy variety for both meals served at the school
- Returning to food preparation in school kitchens with more kitchen staff
- Providing age-appropriate portion sizes
- Reducing food waste
- Incorporating farm-to-school programs or building school gardens for fresh produce

“The school lunches should be cooked at the school not in the form of a TV dinner and there should be more varieties of food for the lunches such as a salad bar or potato bar on different days. They should also have water as an option for something to drink with the lunches.”

“The food service program—there is a lot of food waste that happens daily. It would be great to find a solution to all the food that’s being thrown away by students.”

“The food at lunch needs to be better at all MPS schools. The quality has gone down significantly in the past couple years and it’s discouraging and disgusting at times the things my son and my nieces have told me about the lunch they have been served. The focus ever since I was young was to provide healthy food for your learning students and now you’re providing mush!...Bring back when we paid for lunch so my family can actually be well fed.”

Theme #10: Ongoing issues with technology and communication methods used by the district need to be resolved, including:

- Considering a different parent portal–type system that is more user-friendly
- Providing accessible troubleshooting options for parents when they encounter issues with the parent portal, including a “how-to” for setting up their account
- Offering a data literacy guide for parents when interpreting students’ performance measures
- Refining the high school application process and informing parents of the process earlier (grade 7)
- Communicating features and strengths of the high schools so that students stay in MPS

“Technically, my husband has access to the Parent Portal. I have never managed to successfully connect to it. Not sure why. I can see messages that go to my email, but I am unable to log on to see anything specific to my child. I have tried to rectify this, but nothing seems to work. No one has had the time to help me with this.”



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“Technical support is a zero. I have a google classroom account but can no longer access it. Not the school or MPS has responded to emails on the topic.”

“The process for applying to choice high schools is absolutely frustrating and demoralizing to children. We live in the Fernwood neighborhood and it is sad that no one here wants to send their kids to Bay View High School. Both my husband and I have degrees in higher education and we found it very difficult to navigate the application process for high schools. Yes, we went to the informational meeting.”

“The parent portal is a nightmare too. The information there is normally not updated and even the teachers don’t like using it to give out information. There are 2 or 3 other ways they normally like to keep in contact with parents. Such as email and other apps. There is no standardized way of communication in MPS.”

“Infinite campus is a disorganized mess. It contains tons of outdated and/or useless information. Its layout is confusing and hard to use, and I avoid using it.”

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