



Spring 2024 Strategic Planning Survey – Student Themes

Data as of 6.12.2024

How do you think MPS schools can be improved? Other (please specify) – 451 responses

Students offered the following suggestions:

- Cleaner buildings
- Updated, clean, fully stocked, and functioning bathrooms
- Air conditioning
- Better lunch options and higher quality food
- Stricter policies and/or consistent enforcement of rules regarding bullying
- Bring back the early start calendar
- More funding directed to schools for upgrades, teacher pay, supplies, etc.
- Consistent and stricter enforcement of school rules to reduce challenging behaviors such as fighting, swearing, drug use, and skipping class
- Offer more outdoor time and/or create more green spaces outdoors for students, including older students, to enjoy during the school day
- More highly qualified teaching staff who demonstrate care, respect, and support for their students
- More support for students struggling, whether academically, behaviorally, or social-emotionally
- Address staff shortages, primarily teachers but also school counselors to help with planning for after high school
- Larger classrooms and spaces for learning and collaboration
- More after-school activities offered – sports, clubs, etc.
- More rigorous coursework
- Student voice/more freedom – phone policy, eating outdoors, courses they can take, dress code
- More diversity and inclusion in schools

Why do you go to this school? Other (please specify) – 219 responses

Students commonly cited the reasons below:

- Someone they knew either went to the school in the past or currently does or someone they know works at the school.



- A specific program offered at the school, including arts, language immersion, bilingual education, and special education units/support attracted them to the school.
- They did not get into the school they wanted for a variety of reasons, including missing an application deadline, not having money to go to a choice school, and not enough seats at the school of their choice.
- They were placed at the school for disciplinary reasons.
- They chose the school for credit recovery and meeting graduation requirements.
- The positive reputation of the school's academic program and/or the teaching staff at the school attracted them to the school.
- It's the law that they attend school.
- The sports offered at the school attracted them.
- The student had a mid-year transfer into the district and was placed at their school.

What supports are needed for increased academic achievement at your school? Other (please specify) – 80 responses

Many of the responses were repeats from the previous “other” responses, including the following:

- Clean, well-maintained buildings
- More free time for students during the school day, such as study halls, recess, and “office hours” to get support from teachers
- More sports and extracurricular activities offered to students
- Larger variety of courses offered (e.g., coding, music) and options for credit recovery/acceleration
- Highly qualified teaching staff in all classrooms, not substitutes
- More hands-on learning experiences
- Larger classrooms and spaces for learning and collaboration

Which of the following contribute to a positive learning environment at your school? Other (please specify) – 45 responses

Students often did not respond with the positive aspects of their school but rather provided more suggestions for improvements. Comments that mentioned something that could be improved at their school were instead included in the next question. The following items are a few responses that listed aspects of their school that contribute to a



positive learning environment: student-teacher relationships, student-student relationships, school course offerings, and support adapting to needs of the students.

What would improve your school's learning environment? Other (please specify) – 141 responses

Students provided the following recommendations for improving their school's learning environment:

- Improved student-teacher relationships
- Improved student-student relationships
- Diverse course offerings (e.g., language courses, career pathways/trades, college prep such as AP and dual enrollment)
- More extracurricular and sports offerings
- Updates to the school building and equipment (e.g., air conditioning, technology, outdoor fields/recreational spaces)
- More student voice in school policies (e.g., dress codes, phone policy) and course offerings/selection
- More money for the school
- Recess or free time built into the day
- High-quality teachers in every classroom
- More quiet spaces for students to work and collaborate with peers and/or teachers
- Better classroom and behavior management to reduce disruptions to the learning environment
- Lunch improvements, such as larger portions, a longer lunch period, higher quality food, and fresher food
- More mental health supports for students, such as student support groups and full-time support staff (e.g., counselors, social workers)
- More time allotted for students to seek help from teachers on classwork

How has the school community worked to create a healthy and safe learning environment for students? Other (please specify) – 91 responses

There were very few responses other than the school has done little or nothing to create a healthy and safe learning environment for students, but the few who offered efforts made by their school mentioned strictly enforcing bullying policy, creating student groups such as Student Council, and staff who firmly enforce the behavior expectations and rule violations.



*Select the 3 things that would help you enjoy school more. Other (please specify) –
243 responses*

Students offered a range of suggestions listed below, with the most-cited suggestions appearing first:

- Improve the cleanliness of buildings, especially bathrooms.
- Install air conditioning in all schools.
- Ensure that classrooms are quieter for more productive learning environments (i.e., classroom management must be effective).
- Offer more opportunities for students to connect and socialize with other students (e.g., open lunch, longer lunch, longer transition time, special days like field days, recess), and build more independent/free time into the school day.
- Permit more student voice over school policies (e.g., cell phone, dress code, bathroom policies).
- Ensure that all teaching and school-based staff are supportive, dedicated, and caring.
- Increase the quality of the lunch (e.g., taste, freshness, larger portion sizes).
- Expand the after-school clubs, activities, and sports to make accessibility more equitable across the district.
- Provide more outside learning experiences, such as field trips, for students.
- Ensure that high-quality teachers are in every classroom.
- Enhance the course offerings in the district to offer better and more diverse courses. This includes offering more opportunities for hands-on learning, more advanced coursework, and more engaging content and instructional methods.
- Provide students with more individualized academic support.
- Cultivate positive student-student relationships as well as positive student-teacher relationships to improve the school culture and climate.
- Decrease the instructional time and/or reduce the workload (e.g., less homework, more breaks throughout the year, breaks built into the day, shorter school day or week) to alleviate stress levels.



What is the best way that you learn? Other (please specify) – 100 responses

Students listed the following teaching methods most often as being optimal for their learning:

- Lecture format
- Group discussions, small or large
- Hands-on experiences
- One-on-one attention
- Independently with teachers to support as needed
- Collaborating with friends in the class
- With visualizations

What was your least favorite entree item this year? Why? – 1,718 responses

The two most common responses were some variation of “all” or “almost all” or that they do not eat the school lunch. Students also commonly cited the repetitiveness of the menu options as a major issue, portion sizes that are too small, and a lack of side dishes as other common complaints. Several students claimed that the food made them and/or friends sick (i.e., stomachache) and noted that rotten/moldy fruit is a recurring issue.

Additionally, common descriptors for the food items were *soggy*, *raw/undercooked*, *cold*, *moldy*, *flavorless*, *unappetizing appearance*, *unnatural/fake taste* (e.g., “plasticky” cheese), and *disgusting*. The following list of items are sorted by how frequently they were cited as one of the least-favorite entrees:

- Chicken, including sandwich/patty, mock chicken leg, tenders/nuggets, chicken and rice, and teriyaki/orange chicken (over 25% of responses)
- Mac and cheese (approximately 7% of responses)
- Tacos/walking tacos (approximately 7% of responses)
- Hotdogs/corn dogs/pretzel dog (approximately 6% of responses)
- Baked potato/potatoes/smiley fries (approximately 6% of responses)
- Pizza/pizza bagels/dippers (approximately 6% of responses)
- Ham and cheese (approximately 5% of responses)
- Beans, including baked or green (approximately 6% of responses)
- Chili (approximately 6% of responses)
- Sloppy joes (approximately 6% of responses)
- Burgers (approximately 6% of responses)
- Breakfast foods, including pancakes (< 5% of responses)



- Pasta (< 5% of responses)
- Grilled cheese (< 5% of responses)
- Mashed potatoes (< 5% of responses)
- Alfredo (< 5% of responses)
- Veggie/vegan burgers or nuggets (< 5% of responses)
- PB&J (< 5% of responses)
- Quesadillas (< 5% of responses)

What changes did you see this year in the school nutrition program? Other (please specify) – 295 responses

The majority of students said they did not see any changes to the school lunch program for the 2023–24 school year as compared to last year. Those who did note changes in the menu provided a mixture of criticism and positive feedback on the menu changes:

- There were fewer options/diversity in food choices, especially for sides.
- Lunches had more fruit.
- The lunch program brought back trays.
- Students noted a few new menu items, especially vegetarian/vegan entrees.
- There were fewer pre-packaged meals, more cooked on-site.

What new food items have you tried this year? – 956 responses

Most students indicated they had not tried any new food items, either because they claimed there were no new food items to try or because they do not eat the school lunch. Additionally, many students could not remember if or what new food items they tried during the 2023–24 school year. The students who did provide specific items commonly listed the items below, although some clarified that they did not enjoy the new items they tried:

- Baked potato bar
- Mini-burgers/sliders
- Fries
- Pizza
- Thai meatballs
- Mac 'n' cheese
- Walking tacos/tacos
- Chicken alfredo



- Pretzel hotdog
- Ice cream
- Fruit slushie cup
- Spicy chicken sandwich
- Smiley potatoes
- French toast sticks
- Peanut butter and jelly Uncrustables®
- Calzone
- Veggie burger/nuggets
- Rib sandwich
- Spaghetti/Italian macaroni
- Burrito
- New fruits and/or vegetables (e.g., kiwifruit, starfruit, pineapple, jicama)
- Sub sandwich/wrap
- Brookies

Is there anything that we did not ask but should have asked? – 460 responses

Most respondents either said nothing else should have been asked or took the opportunity to reiterate areas for improvement in MPS schools (e.g., facilities upgrades, air conditioning, cleaner bathrooms, higher quality lunch options, etc.). Those who did provide specific questions or areas they felt were not adequately addressed cited the following areas most often:

- Inquiring how students are doing mentally, emotionally, and academically
- Checking in on whether students feel safe at their school and, if not, what would make them feel safer
- Asking about sports, extracurriculars, and clubs at their school
- The health of student-staff relationships
- How students are feeling more generally about the school they attend (i.e., do they enjoy attending their school)
- How students feel about the cell phone policy
- What improvements/suggestions students have for the school lunch program
- Whether students feel that their school has adequate funding
- How students would rate the quality of staff at their school (not just teachers)
- How the school can make the environment more inclusive for all students
- Whether students feel that bullying is an issue at their school



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- Whether students feel that the workload and expectations are manageable for their classes
- How behaviors are managed at their school and whether they are effectively managed (e.g., drug use, fights)
- What courses and/or specials students would like to see at their school

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