



Strategic Planning Student Survey

Open-Ended Feedback Themes

Theme #1: Students expressed a strong desire to be included in constructing school policies, with the overwhelming majority wanting reforms made in the following areas:

- Cell phone policy
- School dress codes

"We should be able to have our cell phones for emergencies or to be able to contact our loved ones because tomorrow aint promised for no one."

"I believe that [the] dress code is a problem because it is sexist and makes women feel insecure about their bodies."

Theme #2: The quality and quantity of the food program is a major concern for students, with the top recommendations centering on the following areas:

- Providing higher quality, fresher options for school breakfast and lunches
- Offering more options for diverse dietary needs (halal, vegetarian, etc.)
- Providing larger portion sizes for meals
- Offering a variety of snacks that students could purchase throughout the day

"I think that they should bring back all of the old foods, such as lucky charms for breakfast, calzones etc. The new lunches seem like they have no effort and are just reheated."

"GET US BETTER FOOOOOOOOOOOOD"

Additional comments were provided by students in another part of the survey. Those are being analyzed as well.

Theme #3: Students' relationships with school staff were a major concern for several respondents. Efforts to establish more positive student-staff relationships should focus on the following:

- Ensuring that staff and students demonstrate mutual respect toward one another at all times
- Making sure that staff consistently demonstrates that they care about the students
- Regularly soliciting and incorporating student feedback and supporting student voice and choice as much as possible
- Providing opportunities for shared decision-making and rulemaking within the school community
- Making sure that staff maintains professionalism at all times and respects students' personal boundaries and space



“There needs to be more opportunities for students to have a say in things happening at their school or something they want to be done to our school. Many of us don’t get that opportunity, given that people in leadership clubs and student councils have time after school or on the weekends to attend these meetings, while the rest of us don’t work with family and homework and jobs and still trying to maintain a social life all while having good mental health and staying awake during school hours. We just want to feel heard.”

“I don’t think you actually care about our opinions. You’re just asking us these things so you can act like you care but in reality, you don’t. Whenever students voice their opinions the board brushes them off to the side if it’s not something they want to hear or care about. So no, there’s not something you should’ve asked because it doesn’t matter anyways.”

Theme #4: Facilities enhancements should focus on the following:

- Building cleanliness, particularly in school bathrooms
- Ensuring that bathrooms are stocked with supplies, including menstrual products for girls
- Fully stocking all classrooms with the materials they need
- Upgrading Wi-Fi and the technology offered throughout the district
- Investing in revitalizing outdoor areas and playgrounds
- Providing schools with air conditioning
- Updating school gym equipment

“Get heaters and air conditioning they make us go to school in 90-degree weather and we are sweating in the heat and there is no air conditioning.”

“How are the conditions of your building? Answer: it’s gross, absolutely grotesque. We need to have clean classrooms in order to learn effectively. When you walk past the boy’s bathroom it smells like pee, I don’t want to go into the girl’s bathroom because it’s horrendous. The likelihood of me going to the bathroom and it running out of soap and/or toilet paper is about 90%. The hallways are filthy and remnants from last school year’s senior prank are still left on the walls. There is a spaghetti stain on the wall of the gym that has been there for months. The cleanliness of the school itself is a huge problem.”

Theme #5: Students frequently expressed the need for more mental health support and resources in their school, with many feeling either uncomfortable seeking help out on their own or being unable to access support given the limited staff available. The district should focus on providing students with more supports and resources through the following:

- Investing in more support staff (counselors, psychologists, etc.) so that each school has a designated staff member full time
- Incorporating more free time and/or spaces where students can decompress and relax during the school day (recess, free period, brain breaks, etc.)
- Alleviating the workload for students to reduce feelings of stress and burnout



- Teaching students healthy ways to manage their stress

“When it comes to mental health the school has told us countless times the resources are there, but everything is so superficial. Most are unsure how to tell someone they believe their friend needs help. The school counselors have so much to do that the students don’t even know them well enough most of the time to feel comfortable speaking to them. The mental health fair is only full of resources we can use, which is useful but doesn’t quite help anyone’s mental state if there is zero engagement.”

“This school just makes us sit around all day with a 30 minute lunch break, and not allowing us to communicate with our peers. And when we get fidgety or loud, we get reprimanded for it. Maybe if we have a better way to waste energy we wouldn’t be so loud.”

“How often can students socialize or take a 5 min break in order to give the brain a breather so that it can be ready to be able to focus once again. This helps with learning.”

Theme #6: School staff should focus on creating a safe and productive learning environment through the following:

- Issuing consequences for drug use on school property
- Enforcing metal detector checks with fidelity
- Administering more stringent consequences for fighting and other violent acts on school property
- Developing consistent, clear, and stronger policies for bullying that are enforced by all staff
- Addressing student concerns about school shootings, particularly their concerns about the procedure for active shooter situations
- Ensuring that all classrooms are fully staffed

“Is there somewhere else you can put all the loud and bad students? They are about 50% of the reason why we can’t focus in class, they are loud and disrespectful all the time...They are hindering our learning environment.”

“I’ve never felt safe at this school, the teachers are rude, they don’t help us learn...the students are bad and when we tell a teacher they don’t do anything about it. MPS does nothing for us to learn and care for us as kids.”

“About bullies, people in this school talk a lot about others, you should’ve asked anything about how they getting treated by other students and what do the staff or teacher do when they hear it...Not trying to be rude but have y’all watched the news or anything? Kids and all ages are taking they own life because of this [bullying] and don’t get me started on school shootings. Y’all think turning off the light and hiding in the back of the class gonna work? Bro, don’t y’all know school shooters know that?”

Theme #7: Curricular, instructional, and extracurricular changes should prioritize the following areas:

- Providing students with more rigorous and engaging work, fewer worksheets and computer-based activities



- Providing students with regular tutoring and homework help
- Offering more arts programming at all schools
- Enforcing stronger consequences for student misbehavior to limit distractions in class
- Covering more diversity in teaching materials and lessons (African American studies, more languages offered, etc.)
- Allowing more student choice in the courses they take
- Taking students on more field trips that connect to learning
- Preparing students for postsecondary options that go beyond the college track
- Teaching students basic life skills, such as tax preparation, how to rent an apartment/buy a home, financial literacy, resume building, interview skills, etc.
- Offering more options and ensuring equity across schools in extracurricular offerings (swimming, hockey, soccer, dance team/cheer, more girl-specific teams, etc.)

“Let students pick their own class depending on their career choice and college.”

“Letting students create clubs and be able to have a safer work environment.”

“WE NEED MORE ARTS SHOWS, PERFORMANCES, DANCES, PLAYS, we need more love.”

“Real-life learning, like teaching us how to pay taxes, make a loan, and look for and buy a house/apartment. This is high school, y’all are supposed to teach us real-life situations that we can use in case of emergencies.”

Theme #8: School staff need to prioritize creating an inclusive environment for all learners through the following:

- Providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students (clubs, resources, and mental health supports)
- Offering more targeted support for English language learners
- Celebrating and honoring other cultures and religious observances
- Ensuring that school staff are trained and adept at teaching neurodivergent students and students with disabilities
- Making sure that all school staff receive appropriate training related to the diversity of the student body and uphold MPS’s values in inclusion and diversity

“Teachers/staff members have to do something about people for being homophobic and saying slurs.”

“Language inclusion is often only considered in small ways. My family doesn’t even know what IB is and no one cared to provide them with information in Spanish that would explain this. There’s also been a problem with innocent ignorance, what I mean is that many times peers do stuff that is quite an offense or can make someone uncomfortable without meaning to. English is not my first language and I have been laughed at for my bad pronunciation since I look American everyone expects my English to be perfect. I’ve been called ‘exotic’ after telling someone I was from XXXXXX.”

“I would just like to say how rude the security guards can be to students. They don’t respect students’ pronouns or identity and instead throw that back into their face and make them feel worthless.”



Theme # 9: Schools should consider students' mental and physical health when considering calendar and schedule changes. Students would like to see changes in the following areas:

- Switching to later start times to ensure sufficient sleep
- Moving all schools onto the traditional calendar, especially those without AC
- Resolving transportation issues (late arrivals, no shows)
- Having shorter class periods (e.g., 50–55 minutes) to reduce cognitive fatigue
- Changing to a four-day school weeks or half days offered one day/week to allow students more time to rest and catch up on assignments

"If the schools can start school later in the day at 9 or 8:30 because biologically the internal body clock for a 14 to 19 year old is going to typically function to be up later in the day, meaning if we start earlier, the first 1-2 periods are going to be far less effective for learning as we are just going to be tired or half awake, and I see my peers with their heads down and sleeping consistently until around 9 at which point the lesson is already wrapping up and they have missed around 66-75% of it."

"I feel like we shouldn't have 4 classes a day and be in each class for 2 hours. It's too long and causes me to lose attention to my work and it makes the day longer, my body starts to get tired and causes me to sleep in at least one of my 4 classes a day. There should be 8 classes a day and 55 minutes a class."