

Fayette County Public Schools 2015-2016 Public Engagement Executive Summary

Engagement Overview

This school year, Fayette County Public Schools worked with independent research and communications firm K12 *Insight* to engage the entire Fayette community and learn community members' priorities for their school district. A large majority of this work was designed to inform Superintendent Emmanuel "Manny" Caulk's entry plan, "Listening, Learning, and Leading," which has five core values: **Students First; Victory is in the Classroom; Leadership, Capacity Building, Shared Accountability, and Collaboration for Results are Keys to Success; Families are Our Partners; and It Takes an Entire Community to Ensure the Success of Our Public Schools.** Ultimately, the community feedback will help shape a strategic plan that will guide FCPS for the next several years.

From November to March, K12 *Insight* and FCPS leaders facilitated more than 18 community listening sessions to hear a variety of stakeholders' opinions on FCPS' strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. The listening session protocol was built around questions on six topics: **Points of pride, what FCPS does well, where FCPS could improve, priority focus areas, vision for FCPS' future, and engagement with other stakeholder groups.**

In February, the Superintendent Entry Plan Stakeholder Survey asked for feedback from students, employees, families, and community members in six key areas: **Quality of FCPS, mission and strategic plan, areas of strength and areas for improvement, school quality, stakeholder priorities, and communication preferences.**

FCPS also conducted several other surveys to help Superintendent Caulk gather information for his entry plan from different stakeholder groups and on specific topics. They were:

- Organizational Health Inventory (District support services employees)
- Preparing Our School Sites Survey (Principals)
- Business Partners Survey (Current and prospective business partners)
- Special Education Satisfaction Survey (Parents)

Community Participation

In total, these surveys resulted in almost 8,000 responses from the community.

Of those, 6,160 responses were to the Superintendent Entry Plan Stakeholder Survey, including 2,115 from parents and guardians, and 356 from parents who are also district employees. In addition, 2,612 students in grades 9-12 participated in the survey.

In the more than 18 listening sessions conducted this school year, more than 600 stakeholders shared their opinions and experiences with the district and K12 *Insight*. These listening sessions were held throughout the community, targeting students, employees, families and community members.

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Community Feedback

Superintendent Entry Plan Stakeholder Survey

- 77% of participants rate the overall quality of Fayette County Public Schools as excellent or good.
- When asked how the district could earn a higher rating in the future, participants focused on:
 - **Equality and Equity:** *Giving students access to the same educational opportunities regardless of their school*
 - **Teacher Quality:** *Ensuring the district hires and retains effective teachers, and providing quality instruction to students with special needs and English Language Learners*
 - **Class Size:** *Keeping class sizes manageable to allow for more individualized attention*
 - **Instruction Time:** *Focusing class time more on instruction instead of standardized testing and improving discipline practices*
 - **Cafeteria Food:** *Providing higher quality food and healthier options*
- 84% of survey participants think FCPS is achieving its mission somewhat or to a great extent.
- 58% of participants agreed that FCPS ensures all students achieve at high levels.
- 52% agree that FCPS ensures all students graduate prepared to excel in a global society.
- 46% of participants agree that FCPS meets the needs of all students, and 70% identified this as an area that needs improvement.
- 48% of participants said the district should improve student preparation, and 49% said student support should improve.
- 79% of participants believe FCPS provides high-quality educational programs, and 68% think this is a district strength.
- When asked to rank their top priorities, participants selected
 - **Rank 1:** Setting high standards and expectations for all students
 - **Rank 2:** Building a culture of trust and collaboration between the district and schools, as well as school and home
 - **Rank 3:** Ensuring equity of resources across all schools
- When asked what top 3 priorities Superintendent Caulk should focus on, participants said:
 - **Teacher Quality:** *Ensuring the district hires and retains effective teachers, and providing quality instruction to students with special needs and English Language Learners*
 - **Equality and Equity:** *Giving students access to the same educational opportunities regardless of their school*
 - **Class Size:** *Keeping class sizes manageable to allow for more individualized attention*

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Community Listening Sessions

- When asked to identify what they're proud of about FCPS, participants said:
 - **Community Involvement:** *Including the district's diversity and the partnerships established to support for the schools, students, and families*
 - **Caring Staff:** *The presence of dedicated, quality staff members who care for students*
 - **Student Success:** *The high academic achievement of FCPS students*
 - **Variety of Courses and Extracurricular Activities:** *Including opportunities in the fine and performing arts, sports and athletics, and career and technology education; and the scope of academic programs*
 - **Rigor of Coursework:** *Including the district's gifted and talented and IB programs, opportunities to access college-level coursework, and the rigor of general curriculum*
 - **Facilities:** *The increase in the property tax to renovate schools, the clean and beautiful schools, and the well-maintained facilities equipped with updated technology*
- When asked what FCPS does well, participants said:
 - **Community Engagement:** *FCPS' collaboration with people outside of the district; engagement with local businesses and organizations (e.g., Junior Achievement, Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau); and communication with community members*
 - **Positive Environment:** *Making students feel secure, safe, heard, and valued*
 - **Variety of Courses and Extracurricular Activities:** *Providing students with a rich educational experience that enables them to find their niche*
- When asked what FCPS could do better, participants said:
 - **Guidance Counseling:** *Providing more counselors for schools, particularly to help juniors and seniors with college and career planning, and middle school students take advantage of all of the unique high school programs; in addition, participants suggested:*
 - Improving understanding of CTE courses
 - Advertising course and extracurricular offerings
 - Improving scheduling so all students who are interested can enroll
 - **School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Councils:** *Improving shared decision-making at every school so the SBDM councils truly take part in the process, and ensuring equity from school to school*
 - **Skills Courses:** *Offering additional courses that teach academic skills (e.g., how to study properly) and life skills (e.g., budgeting, balancing a checkbook)*
 - **Ensuring Systematic Excellence:** *Ensuring access and opportunities are equitable across the district, hiring more diverse staff and educating existing staff to better reach and serve minority students, meeting the needs of students with additional needs*
 - **Physical Activity and Socialization Time:** *Providing students with more time to exercise and develop social skills*
 - **Responsive Teaching Approach:** *Better tying the curriculum to authentic learning opportunities, considering students' strengths and weaknesses to differentiate instruction, and offering interactive learning opportunities*

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- **MAP vs FAST:** *Reinstating the MAP tests*
- **Parental Involvement:** *Ensuring parents are welcomed, treated respectfully, and have a clear point of contact who responds to them*
- **Communication:** *Communicating in a way that is accessible, reliable, transparent, timely, and up to date*
- When asked about what should be Superintendent Caulk's top priorities, participants said:
 - **Teachers:** *Ensuring the district hires and retains effective teachers*
 - **Equal/Equitable Resources:** *Giving students access to the same educational opportunities regardless of their school*
 - **Course Planning and Scheduling:** *Improving scheduling so all students who are interested can enroll*
 - **Parent and Community Involvement:** *Using parents and the community as a resource that can support school efforts*

Common Themes

In the findings from both the Superintendent Entry Plan Stakeholder Survey and the community listening sessions several topics appeared multiple times. These common themes show clear opportunities to address community priorities and make improvements that benefit all FCPS students.

Some of the common themes were:

- **Equity:** Participants expressed concerns that access to educational opportunities and programs varied from school to school.
- **High-Quality Teachers:** Participants want the district to focus on hiring and retaining effective teachers so students receive high-quality instruction regardless of their learning needs (e.g., special education, English Language Learners).
- **Class Size:** Participants would like to see FCPS reduce class sizes so students receive more individual attention.
- **Relationship Building:** Participants would like to see FCPS continue to build collaborative relationships with parents and families.