

Community Conversations Overall Summary

Presented to the School Board

Thursday, February 13, 2014

Series Summary: During the month of January 2014 the School Board and administration engaged members of the Swallow School community to ensure understanding of the Master Planning Process and to receive community feedback in the following three focus areas:

- *What does the community believe our educational programming should include to ensure we inspire every child to achieve maximum potential for future success as a self-directed, problem-solving, responsible, life-long learner?*
- *What services do you expect the Swallow School District to provide for the school community?*
- *What are features of the building and grounds you believe will best support the desired educational programming and services expected by the Swallow community?*

Participants: Across the ten events 23% of current Swallow families participated in the *Community Conversations* series, for a total resident participation rate of 7%.

Feedback in the Focus Areas: Feedback gained through this process showcases a strong representation of what the Swallow School community values related to educational programming and expected services to ensure we are meeting the district's mission. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of dots expended to prioritize this area by participants. Overall trends are presented here for the Board's review and as discussion unfolds, nuances of dialogue and unique sentiments expressed through this process will be shared.

Educational Programming

Five main themes arose related to educational programming. Descriptions are below:

Curricular Offerings in General: (127)

While traditional curricular offerings can provide a solid educational foundation, stakeholders value innovative and challenging curricular programming to ensure students are mastering 21st century skills, are aware of different cultures, and have experience as members of a global community of learners.

A firm foundation in reading/communicative arts is of paramount importance as students must be even better communicators in the 21st century than ever before. Stakeholders value varied offerings and integrated curricular programming to ensure the highest levels of proficiency in this curricular area, especially in the upper grades.

The community wants to recognize the unique needs of early learners, special needs students, and gifted/talented students and ensure that programming and services are well-developed and provided amply in these areas.

The community placed an emphasis on making sure assignments and assessments grow the abilities of students by requiring higher level thinking in order to make sure the district is meeting its mission. A particular emphasis was placed on programming that engages students in solving real world issues which require creative, out of the box thinking and doing on the part of students to achieve proficiency in content and skill mastery.

The community values Swallow's mission and wants to ensure that students leave here with a firm foundation in learning how to learn. Consistent programming and communication in the area of study skills development to make sure students are ready for high school and a much larger school setting was an area of particular emphasis.

Stakeholders would like to see choice in educational offerings when and where possible in the upper grades so that students can pursue passions and develop a more self-directed approach to future career pathway options.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) Offerings: (65)

The community hopes students can experience significantly more programming at Swallow in the areas of STEAM. Stakeholders value an integrated hands-on (lab) approach to maximize students' opportunity to problem-solve and think in new and different ways to demonstrate proficiency in this area.

Personalizing Learning for Students: (62)

Community members value the strong relationships Swallow staff develop with each child during their time here and believe that student learning can be maximized with the creation of Individualized Learning Plans (ILP) which marry this deep staff knowledge of each student with student ownership in the learning process through the creation of an ILP.

In keeping true to the mission, stakeholders want to make sure that students are maximizing their potential in the learning process and view flexible learning options such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, choices in assessment/projects, and multi-age settings as ways to ensure this occurs for each student.

World Language Offerings: (46)

The community values world language instruction as a part of Swallow's curricular programming and would like to see more languages offered. Additionally stakeholders value the option for students to select either a survey experience in world languages or a more focused approach leading to proficiency in a language of choice.

Wellness—Social, Emotional, and Physical Health: (22)

Stakeholders value programming that is developmentally appropriate and assists students in learning peer-peer problem-solving skills, development of emotional intelligence, and emphasizes lifetime activities to ensure long-term wellness for mind and body.

Expected Services

Three main themes arose related to expected services. Descriptions are below:

Before and After School Offerings: (113)

The Swallow community values enrichment offerings for students outside of the regular school day to allow students to explore new areas of learning, pursue passions, and grow talents beyond required curricular programming. Expansion of offerings as a compliment to current fine arts and athletic programming to include an array of academic and social clubs along with intramural sports would be welcomed.

Stakeholders want to continue to see after care options for working parents and hope that before school care can be considered if there is enough interest from families with young children.

Community-Building Offerings: (80)

With a 170-year tradition as a school community, Swallow takes pride in being viewed as a 'family' and community members want to ensure Swallow remains a hub for community-building events and programming (whether school-sponsored or not) such as the Tailgate, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, SEF events, and informal times when the community can gather together.

Adult Learning Opportunities: (42)

Swallow community members value education and are lifelong learners who are excited to come to the school for additional learning themselves. Suggested areas for offerings include: technology tutorials, book clubs, guest speakers on an array of topics from parenting to internet safety, and Wellness experiences.

Features of the Buildings and Grounds

Three main themes arose related to features of the building and grounds. Descriptions are below:

Overall Building and Grounds: (33)

Stakeholders want to see the building and grounds modified to be accessible and safe for all members of the school community. Many suggested a secure entry sequence in the front of the school and appreciate the visitor sign in process the school currently uses.

Indoor Spaces: (166)

Overall the community feels that the building is lacking in useful meeting spaces of all sizes and values the creation of a variety of flexible spaces that allow for privacy when warranted, communal gatherings, showcases of student talent, collaborative work for students and staff, and innovative programming that meets the district mission.

In addition to the flexible spaces described more generally, there is an articulated desire for large, open, lab-like spaces to allow for more creative, hands-on learning for students to grow programming in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM).

The performing arts are highly valued in the Swallow community and community members would like to see a space for performing arts practices and performances that is more conducive to student learning needs and allows for better showcasing of student talents in this area.

To support wellness and nutritional offerings, along with social skill development, the community values ensuring the kitchen and cafeteria can support the preparation of meals that are created using fresh ingredients and a space conducive to eating the meals.

Outdoor Spaces: (63)

Outdoor spaces that can support, enhance, and expand educational programming so that students can enjoy experiential learning are valued by stakeholders.

The community requests continued review of how the building and grounds can be most safely accessed by pedestrians and bike riders and efficiently used to meet parking demands during busy times of the day or for special events.