LMSD’s Future: What’s Coming Into Focus

1. People are more on the same page than anticipated. Interested in alternate teaching models > paradigm shift > not typical classroom. People want more individual attention paid to their child.

2. Education is a fluid process. Constant change and ever changing population. LMSD has worked very hard to meet the needs of as many people as possible. Incisive as a whole.

3. We are ready to let go of the definition of success being the scores. An independent learner and thinker needs to do more than fill out bubbles (critical thinking / moral compass).

4. School Board more emphasis on children being given more time to do reading/pleasure reading. Children learn vocabulary from reading and writing. Basic math and grammar skills are needed.


6. Ted Talk took computers to India and set them up and left. When they returned, the children were surfing the internet. We ask “How do we get kids to love to learn?” We need to do less. See our children differently.

7. “I never teach my student, I just create the conditions to learn.” Einstein

8. Every one of us wants our kids to be engaged and currently they are not.

9. How do we move from here to simplicity/focus? Get down to the really big take-aways and how do they connect to core values. What is the central conversation?

10. “Do you have the political will?” Need to let go of some things to do the right thing. Being bold is a leap of faith. Defining/redefining self > we are ok.

11. Open space to students: No, instead did focus group format. Got input from middle and high school students. For elementary, they asked students to participate in an art project describing the future of school / teacher / technology, etc. (e.g. future teacher is a fairy so could move around to each student more quickly, do my homework through glasses that allow me to just think of the answer to my homework and it goes to my teacher).

12. Steering Committee: 67 invitations were sent with 63 RSVPs received. The names of the Steering Committee will be made public through the Strategic Plan website.

13. Bold choice = to reinvent. How bold are you willing to be?

14. Testing has a big impact. We would love to scale back but want to be #1 like Radnor, T.E., etc. Driving force even impacts property values. Bold is getting out of this rat race and not blowing 7-10 days on testing.

15. Diminishing returns on SAT

16. LMSD is working from a position of strength. “We are not broken.”

17. Rebranding ourselves: We look at test scores but if there was something else on there, would use that. Thinking, doing, learning. Champion Science Olympiad team is better measure of success.

18. We should share real world examples of why we are great – website – brand. That’s what private schools do and we can do the same thing.

19. Good idea for kids to have a mandatory course in finance and other basic business/life skills.
20. How bold are you willing to be? We define success for ourselves. If we truly believe this is the way to produce well-rounded global human beings, then that is what we should do. Hold onto strengths and make them stronger. We will need to brand with boldness.

21. What we are doing here tonight is something really special. As an educator, I want to take this back to my district.

22. Liz – Most important things are:
   a. Shifting of relationships
   b. Shifting of mindsets

23. Life and organizational skills, time management, etc. need to be taught. If they learn this, then the grades will improve.

24. More integration. Water Bound is disjointed and is hard for the students to pull together.
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Raising the Ethical Standard

Key discussion points:

Need Consistent Guidelines for teachers, parents, and students to stress ethical values.

Parents need help with what they should do as parents in teaching their kids. There should be clear communication from the school as to what is expected from an ethical standpoint.

Teachers could reinforce behaviors through better role modeling. To lay the groundwork to be respectful, you need to

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Is there a character educational program that schools use or could be implemented at the school? Develop more of those teachers who have the outreach capability to the students.

Convener: Note Keeper: Amani Aky

Participants:

Megan Shafer Rebecca Kwiat
Steve Singer Meghan Millard Chris Hall
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Raising Ethical Standards

Key discussion points:

Empower the kids to be respectful—may not like what another is doing or saying but there should be respect for that person and their point of view.

Reinforce empathy and kindness all throughout school career.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Many opportunities within core curriculum courses to have ethical discussions.

Middle school IB program should be a consideration—critical thinking is something that is required not just at the H.S. level.

Convener: Note Keeper:

Participants:
**LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)**

**DISCUSSION TOPIC:** Ideas for Improving Student Focus

**Key discussion points:**
- Too much information thrown at students.
- Limit course content - can't learn information thoroughly.
- Use integrated curriculum instead of discrete subjects.
- Move away from memorizing and use more hands on learning.
- More of a collaboration between teachers on teams.
- Students need help to learn to become better organizers and time managers (e.g., Baldwin School spends time stressing to students the importance of organization and give them the tools to do so - time is spent on this life skill).
- Increase downtime/recess during the day.

*Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:*

- **Hands on Learning**
  - Integrated curriculum - provide more opportunities, rather than 1 class per grade at Middle School.
  - Increase downtime / more recess.
  - Need less regurgitation of information from teachers to students.

**Convener:**
Paul Brennan

**Participants:**
Alice Liu-Brown

**Note Keeper:**
Amani Aly

Steve Singer
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Ideas for Improving Student Focus

Key discussion points:

use a yoga ball instead of sitting at a desk all day to help with those students who may need differentiated learning.

Put more information or class blog on E-Boards.
Technology is used too much in class.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Convener: Note Keeper:

Participants:
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Inclusive Schools - More Unity Less Us vs. Them

Key discussion points:

- Race
- Empower & Find strengths
- Easier to do at Elementary School

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LSM:

- Find natural ways for students to cross boundaries
- Find ways to truly engage the students
- We need to have & feel a sense of community
- Do our students feel like they are competing against each other rather than a team?
- Comes down to how we define success

Convener: Lynn Brandsma Note Keeper: Lynn Brandsma

Participants:
Katy Morris  John Gordon
Dan Martino  Shael Patel

DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK—USE AN ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Common Core Issues

Key discussion points:

- Common core is a big problem
- It's confusing, irrelevant, it doesn't address critical thinking.
- How should we address this curriculum?
- Curriculum choices seem very narrowly defined and pigeon-hole teachers
- Not enough freedom/flexibility for teaching/learning
- Not enough emphasis on student choice or pleasure reading
  and choice of what to read

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Convener: Mike Yaros  
Note Keeper: Cheryl Masterman

Participants: Mike Yaros  
Cheryl Masterman  
Gerald Doria
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Wellness

How do we balance?

Key discussion points:

- School is a pivotal place where
- Stronger emphasize on wellness
- Do we have a curriculum that addresses social emotional
- What does it mean to be humane
- Wants a good school climate
- Conduct a needs assessment
- Psychoanalytical
- Teaching students how to handle their emotions

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSTD:

- Can we look at a curriculum that helps support the social emotional needs of student.
- How do we help teach skills to regulate, make sense of their emotions, resiliency.
- Social emotional wellness drives learning, teaching and academic outcomes.
- Concentrating on school climate, are we valuing our children as human beings or investment.

Convener:

Note Keeper:

Participants:

we want well balanced, well able adults - good humane beings.
DISCUSSION TOPIC:  
wellness  Pa

Key discussion points:
wellness - emotional and social
lives of students - school climate -
What is the school climate in Lower Merion - How do we describe it?
How is it measured?

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

See above -
How do we understand the psychological, subjective lives of students

Convener:  
Note Keeper:  
Participants:  Mia / Wagner / Ed
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Testing and use of school time

Key discussion points:
- The impact of time for mandated student testing is overwhelming
- Overemphasis of exam results/pressure on students
- Why is it needed so frequently?
- Blended learning model may minimize impact on instructional time

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LSM:
- Look at capital plan more effectively by staggering hours and offering courses at different times
- Minimize half days and look at maximizing instructional time

Convener: Note Keeper:

Participants:
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Back to Basics

Key discussion points:

Better books, other supplies
Better grammar, spelling other basic skills
Math: possibly too many ways taught initially
reputation - not good certainly math teachers
so are they just know their stuff but not as
good at teaching?

Is it helpful early on to assess which of
multiple approaches clearly work
best for that child?

In general, stronger better hands on approaches to
really learning key concepts, such as science.

More listening to what’s working in the class
and assessing and better guidance at
really teaching core subjects.

Especially with security, not having as many
people in buildings/teacher interaction so
people need stronger means of hearing
parents input.

Concern about loss of time by student incorporated
when looking up computer assignments and
doing the work on the computer. - More

typed, well-edited essays - Less PowerPoint,
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Back to Basics

Key discussion points:

- Important to have building blocks  
  - i.e. beginning writing in lower schools  
  - summer reading -> writing guest for testing  
  - summer packets

- "Stop coddling" - more meaningful homework  
  - progressively

- More consistency on how things are taught  
  - i.e. diff. English classes/same final  
  - electives  

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Convener:  
Note Keeper:

Participants:
DISCUSSION TOPIC:

Key discussion points: Participants:

Jennifer Fried
Robin Ornel - note taker
Michael Neary
Shital Patel
Eric Rittenhouse

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Core Skills! Update materials!
Stronger ways to teach core concepts
More interaction between parents and from parents to school.
Concern of loss of time when students go on computer to look at assignments and when actually doing work.

Convener: Note Keeper:

Participants:
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Teaching Evs & Inputs

Key discussion points:
- Parent feedback key to developing Teacher Evaluation Process.
  - Teachers already busy, so develop meaningful, results-oriented approach. "Peer coaching" should be seen as teamwork vs. hurelfre. "Method for parent input that user to teacher for next time.
  - Assess test instructions to see if grade level or if entire class misses, then could be question.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:
- Important feedback from higher teachers re. the skill levels of kids coming from certain teachers.
- Listen to parents @ Why they need tutors rather than generalize about pushing kids ahead.
- Academic recovery would be more effective in middle of day vs. at end when kids done w/ school.

Convener: Note Keeper:
Participants:
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Differentiated Learning

Key discussion points:

- Differentiate reading & subjects other than just math
- Clustering kids & based on their ability
- Get away w/ grades (A, B, C, ...) & consider vertical classrooms
- Get them kids engaged in elem. school through project-based learning & meeting at their ability level
- Communicate between schools so there is not repetition of curriculum
- Learning online (hybrid learning) & using school for enhancement, social

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Kids, even those not gifted or w/ a disability, aren't being met at their abilities & their needs are not being met.

Convener: Kassie Abrams  
Note Keeper: Robyn Needleman  
Mrs. Johnson

Participants:
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Testing

Key discussion points:
- Missing authentic, real world learning
  Takes instructional time and diverts the focus from teaching and curriculum
  Testing pigeon-holes what is being taught; you lose those teachable moments
- What do we do with the information/data?
- Too much time on the tests;
- Costly to test what is really needed -- critical thinking
- The state funding does not justify the amount of time and energy we spend
- Where do we go from here?
  - reduce to 3, 5, 8 years
  - push back where we can w/ funding

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMDS:

These are children, not data points

Convener: Meghan Millard
Note Keeper: Meghan Millard
Participants: Megan, Cheryl, Katy
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Helping children stay competitive in a global world

Key discussion points:

- How to measure success of US vs. world - K-12s
- Creativity in US/North America is higher than other countries (eg. Asian countries)
- We are behind in math skills but innovation is our forte
- Application of the math etc. skills is very important & should be focussed
- International tests may not be fair as they are given to top students in international countries

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

We should make our schools take notice of other countries' methods and incorporate their ideas in our curriculum

Convener: Wagner
Participants: Rebecca Kwart
            Scott Enslage

Note Keeper: Sheena Hansey
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Helping Children Stay Competitive in a Global World

Key discussion points:

- Language needs to be conversational & enable our students to converse with other people from across the world.
- Globally competitive is so important.
- Testing in some schools does not take into account certain things like IB programs.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Convener:

Note Keeper:

Participants:
LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (WVMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: How should we define success?

Key discussion points:
- Test scores (PSSA, SAT, AP)
- % age of college-bound grads & where they go
- Faculty/student ratio
- Per-pupil spending

Future:
- Students who contribute to the community
- Functioning members of society
- Branding/promote our educational program on our website (like private schools) instead of our test scores
- Students with a strong moral compass
- "Independent learners, thinkers, doers"
- Good reading, writing, math skills with room for electives ~BALANCE~

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Success means our children are "independent learners, thinkers, doers."

(If) we reject test scores as the measure of our success, we need to promote the other areas that make us exceptional:
- Strong reading, math, writing skills
- Plus strong moral compass and ethics.

Convener: Katy Morris
Note Keeper:
Participants: Mike Yaros, Meghan Millard, Chris Hall, Cheryl Masterman Ed
DISCUSSION TOPIC: How to engage students to be self-directed learners.

Key discussion points:

- We need skilled teachers who can keep kids "on the edge of their seats" — truly engaged. Professional development and mentoring is key.
- Need appropriate rigor for each student — instruct at their level.
- Authentic learning is important.
- Problem-based learning
- Deeper, more critical thinking — writing, thinking, speaking skills.

How do we define success?

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

We need to be aware of and open to multiple ways to reach students and assess students.

Convener: Barbara Johnson  Note Keeper: Andrea Koban Payne
Participants: Geraldine Fitzpatrick — Doria
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Changing the Educational Paradigm

Key discussion points:

- Sir Ken Robinson - Industrial model of education outdated.
  - Do well to get grades VS. do well to satisfy self needs.
  - Why are we chasing the grades? Value.

- Innovative education.

- Inspire & engage children

- Interdisciplinary education seems to be helpful.

- Making kids thirst for knowledge.

- Student-driven projects + collaboration (ownership)

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:


Convener: Fred Abrams
Note Keeper: Kassie Abrams
Participants: Robyn Needelman, Mr. Martino

Mike Segal
DISCUSSION TOPIC: Pursuing Pathways within the District Curriculum

Key discussion points:
- Kids should have a Focus
- Shop Classes and music classes, for example should be honored more as a core curriculum.
- We are too tech and college-focused
- Update the individual student’s schedule to a more individualized approach (substitute a history class for an automotive class)

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

- How to make middle and high school curriculum more attractive to the apathetic and disengaged student.
- Possibly create pathways (not unlike college majors) to expand options.
  * Core curriculum is a thread throughout
  * Scientific pathway, music pathway, hospitality pathway, service pathway, mathemetic pathway, literary pathway
- Essentially expanding “waterbonds” and “artifacts” to other pathways!

Convener: Tom
Note Keeper: John + Tom
Participants: Debbie, John, Lynne, Kate