

Focus Group: Penn Valley Elementary School Staff

Date: May, 2014 (Revised from April, 2014)

SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunity	Threats
Provides hands on material & resources for curriculum and instruction	Equal access to technology	Opportunity to lead in providing for second language learners and at risk students.	This district lags behind in providing preschool and full day kindergarten.
Collaboration of teachers	Half- day kindergarten	Multi age classrooms in grades K-2	Facilities limitations
Bringing students of concern up to achievement	Planning for PIE	Full day kindergarten for all students or the Title 1 schools starting earlier than February	
Team and trying different strategies	Writing Block	Transitional first grade entailed assessment for K and 1st	Title 1 schools in the district have the same amount of specialists as the smaller and less needy schools.
Experienced/ Dedicated teachers	Primary report cards don't match curriculum	Children going to other classrooms for guided reading based on need	Need another reading specialist (part-time) or Title 1 tutors to help in primary grades
Quantity of Resources (utilization of)	Communication	Chance for students (culture, identity) to be "seen" all over building	Social media
Education	Common Planning time	Advanced technology	parents
Students are very caring of others and their differences	Functional and Meaningful technology	Service Learning	Technology (outside)
Smart teachers with a lot to offer	Ratio/Equity of Specialists to students	Equitable participation in extra activities	A lot of doors
A firm commitment to educating the whole child	Too many indicatives w/out longevity to implement and/or maintain	Building responsibilities	Spread out
Parent communication	Staff morale	Suggestion box for the staff that is managed and respected for the ideas that they bring	Lack of communication

Recognizing the need to move towards being a "green school"	Community amongst the teachers	Integration of Technology	Poor building morale
Higher education	No substitutes	Easier access to supplies, materials and copiers	Work overload
Differentiated instruction	Equity	Try the FISH philosophy: Be there. Play. Make their day. Choose your attitude. www.charthouse.com	Lack of resources
Flexibility	Building climate/culture is not very "friendly"	STEM	Class sizes and unbalanced classes
Communication among colleagues	A clearer vision for the school/district's direction is needed	Attracting new talent to the district	National and state government mandates with curricula and assessment for those curricula
Keeping students safe	The need for specific, appropriate, relevant and motivating feedback	National recognitions: i.e.: Blue Ribbon, NSPRA	Private schools/school vouchers
Collaboration between spec ed teachers & SLPs	Balancing class arrangement of students	New ideas	Economic stress
Goal setting	Lack of time for teachers to process and analyze collaboratively	More space available	State accountability evaluation/rating systems
Accommodating student needs	Accountability for some not for all mentality exists	More flex grouping so students can get individualized instruction. Creating more extensions to our reading/writing programs to offer enrichment	Overly- involved parents getting involved in curriculum
Address diversity	Unwillingness to help others	Sick Day Bank	Adding any new program
Address resources to meet the needs of all learners	Report cards	Coverage System	Groups and clubs that discriminate by race and gender
Responsive and supportive to families, children and staff	Time management	Trainings	Creating focus groups by race
Principals are supportive	Lack of consistent management	PRPs	Time for planning

work hard	Teacher training	Dividing up the workload more efficiently	Class placement
Putting needs of students first	In-service days	Groups meet regularly	Time Management
Provides a lot of staff development	Structured programs	Create common good	Physical and mental health of staff
	Collaboration between spec ed. and regular ed teacher	Support each other	Cyber schools
	PSSA scheduling	Not rushing to implement new program (EDK). More time to effectively plan and implement	Attitudes of families toward staff and the way staff are treated
	Modified assessments/curriculum	Mentor program for all classroom aides would be beneficial to all new IA's in order to familiarize them with procedures and expectations	inflexibility
	People fee overwhelmed		personal goals
	Many people have had personal losses and health concerns and that added to the ongoing stressful conditions of the buildings		testing/accountability with current evaluations. Unnecessary competition based on variables out of school's control
	Little commmeradary		Implementing any more new curriculum or testing
	Groups and teams working together		children's sicknesses and health problems should require a 24 hour wait period before they can return to school. This policy should be strictly enforced.
	PVAT/IEP meetings starting on time and running more smoothly		
	All staff members to have CPI training in order to better address behavior issues		

Key Questions		
<p>1. What should school look like ten years from now?</p> <p>More personalized learning and less whole group instruction. Elementary schools should be high access environments to support personalized and extended learning opportunities. Schools should provide tablets to all elementary students. All elementary schools should have a pre-K and full day kindergarten. Redesign schools so that teachers are less</p> <p>All classrooms should have a smart board and projector mounted on ceiling- some of use have projectors and documents cameras but cannot use because of small space in rooms</p> <p>Interdisciplinary Curriculum</p> <p>Less standardized testing</p> <p>Functional/project based assessments</p> <p>An aligned report card</p>	<p>2. What should a Lower Merion School District graduate look like? What are the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that we want for all students?</p> <p>The LMSD graduate should have excellent interpersonal skills. She should work well as a part of a team and collaborate effectively. Our graduates should be highly skilled in technology and possess excellent communication skills. LMSD graduates should have strong reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. Our graduates should be creative and divergent at solving problems for future generations.</p> <p>Flexibility</p>	<p>3. What do we value as a District? How do we hold onto our traditions while simultaneously embracing change?</p> <p>Enter to learn. Go forth to serve. We need to know and clearly define our values first.</p> <p>cultural proficiency is valued</p> <p>Difference are celebrated</p> <p>Values individuality</p> <p>Appreciate different learning styles</p> <p>High quality education which includes the whole individual</p>

Classrooms will be paperless	Household Management	Difference
Classrooms will cater to more individualized instruction based on a student's passions	Time Management	Trying new things
Communication will vastly improve	Goal- Setting	Authentic experiences- project change, trips, events
New learning spaces will pop up- no more individual desks	Emergency Preparedness	Academic excellence
More technology. Smart boards in every classroom, mounted projectors and a class set of WORKING computers	Communication	Closing the achievement gap
Lights that turn off when we leave a room	Critical Thinking	Early learning efforts
Coded classroom doors made with safety in mind	Global Thinking	Social responsibility
Spec. Ed, gifted and learning support as total push in	Accountability/Responsibility for own learning and success	Partnership with the community we serve
More efficient assessments and utilize technology	What makes you happy	Differentiated instruction to meet/strive to meet all students needs
Mixed ability groups	Respectful	Strong academic programs
Common themed curricula	Leadership skill	Sensitivity to differences/value differences that allow students to learn from one another
Technology rich resources	Demonstrate academic achievement	Opportunities for extra-curricular activities
Digital citizenship and responsibility	Search and synthesize information	Value parental support/guidance/involvement
Opportunities for performance based assessments	Problem solver	We value our reputation in preparing students for life after high school

<p>Opportunities for demonstrating critical thinking, collaboration and creativity</p>	<p>work collaboratively</p>	<p>We value the holistic child with more of an emphasis on ALL students (despite culture, race-STEM, CARE seem to be exclusive)</p>	
<p>Opportunities to develop interpersonal communication skills</p>	<p>Demonstrate cultural competency</p>	<p>Recommended changes need not disrupt our ability to teach and prepare these students</p>	
<p>Development of global perspective</p>	<p>Demonstrate social awareness</p>	<p>We value diversity, accountability and responsibility as a district. We embrace change at a constant rate and are flexible. We change by having in-services and being educated on the new changes in school systems</p>	

<p>More support services- reading specialist. Math specialist</p>	<p>Demonstrate adaptability</p>	<p>Students should continue to be exposed to music, art, languages and physical education to ensure well-rounded individuals. There should be opportunities for different ways to learn to compete with online and charter schools. This district offers families talented and creative staff to educate their children. Staff needs to be valued by central administration as respect fosters high morale which in turn generates productivity, creativity and ultimately students would be inspired by this level of excellence. School-based staff-the frontline and foundation of any District- needs central administrative staff to get truly focused on the day-to day business that takes place with students in schools. while someone needs to have the "big picture" in mind too much time is take up with assignments/tasks/analyses/inlanning</p>	
<p>Smaller classes</p>	<p>Demonstrate entrepreneurship</p>		
<p>Less testing</p>	<p>Strong academic base</p>		
<p>More flex grouping across grade levels to allow for easier differentiation</p>	<p>Ability to read and write fluently</p>		

<p>Common standards for acceleration or extra help</p>	<p>Confident and competent</p>		
<p>All classroom/ grade levels on the same schedule</p>	<p>Well established values and beliefs</p>		
<p>Collaboration/communication time built in</p>	<p>Good citizen</p>		
<p>Less paper, more online, more technology overall (smart boards for everyone)</p>	<p>Productive and independent</p>		
<p>Tiered teaching model</p>	<p>Socially, academically and behaviorally well rounded. Students will leave with a sense of what they want to do in the future. They will have professional dispositions across the board. They will also have extra curricular activities/interest. That the students will have a strong outlook on various needs/disabilities/abilities and be diverse. Students will play an active role in the community by volunteering</p>		

<p>Students using technology in every aspect of the curriculum and communicating worldwide with other school districts. Staff collaborating world wide with other school districts. Universal design for learning to meet the needs of all learners. When school days are missed (due to weather or absent), students are on computers for the day for instruction, so days are never missed. Standardized tests are going to be eliminated and more generalized assessments</p>	<p>Worker- hand on willingness</p>		
<p>Hands on</p>	<p>Sociable- good in/with groups- collaborators</p>		
<p>Experiential learning</p>	<p>Strong public speaker/leader</p>		
<p>Group oriented</p>	<p>Thirsty for knowledge</p>		
<p>task based</p>	<p>"Lets find out" and Let's try" attitudes</p>		
<p>Community atmosphere</p>	<p>Abstract thinkers</p>		
<p>Strong art, music, library, PE, FLES and health- incorporated content integration</p>	<p>Happy- not stressed</p>		
<p>Provide space/classes for technology instruction, a class on how to properly use iPad, laptops and smart boards</p>	<p>Willingly ready to do what the job takes in the workforce</p>		

<p>schools should balance technology, hands on learning and simple back to basic strategies and learning experiences that children enjoy. Opportunities for a program that included distance learning (online or in the field experiences) should be considered. Brick and mortar buildings should be organized around differentiation based on student interests rather than only on instructional level and chronological age. Elementary schools should include opportunities for students to learn outside of their age-based learning cadre and to practice divergent thinking along with convergent thinking and skill development. Students should have regular opportunities to create for themselves, based around themes/areas of study and/or</p>	<p>Well rounded, love learning, prepared with the skills and knowledge needed to go forth with future endeavors</p>	
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Students should be well-rounded students. It is important for them to possess not only academic skills, but they should also have the skills to cope with stress, work collaboratively, have the ability to be assertive, and have a sense of confidence in themselves. Students also need to have a sense of empathy, should understand what entitlement is and how it has developed historically and plays currently. Students need a true sense of social connection and therefore social responsibility and simply a no blames oblige attitude toward "helping the less fortunate? while having little or no idea why conditions are as they are or how patronizing and condescending such an attitude is. A sense of local, regional, national and world citizenship needs to be fostered, as well as a deep understanding of and respect for the multicultural state of both the U.S. and the