

November 2020 - January 2021 Thought Partner Feedback

Race	Gender	Comment
African or African American	male	As a student, he was wondering when extracurricular funding will go if sports are canceled because of COVID restrictions. He was also wondering about next year's budget cut and where funds will be "scraped" from.
Hispanic	female	Potential source of decreased enrollment: "There are some family members (in the district) who don't speak English and don't know the process of enrolling their child in kindergarten so they usually go in-person for that but now everything is online so it makes it harder." Minnesota and increasing funding: "I believe the state of MN will help by increasing the funds." "I think they should increase funding for education. Education is something that is important. It is important to educate many students. I think it would affect many future students if we don't increase funding." Questions: "Overall funding, I just wonder how things are going with teachers and substitutes? The funding for lunches? Where are they going to get the money for lunches because I know that affects the school a lot?"
Latinx	female	Race equity coaches are great, but administration needs to emphasize the importance of this work and make it a condition of employment. School leaders need to hear more from equity coaches in a reporting (not accusatory) manner. We need to communicate more with families who's first language isn't English. Could teacher's get cell phones to more easily text families? Some families miss out on backpack and email messages - texts are an easy, non-intimidating way to communicate.
More than one	female	I think enrollment is down for several reasons even pre-covid: - Minimal art and science education compared to surrounding districts, k-5. - Little to no resources for high achieving students, k-8. Eyes roll when parents request more rigor; not a priority here. More will leave unless there is more justification given for eliminating 5+ math, and follow through on differentiation in the classroom to challenge high achieving math students. - Intense focus on closing the achievement gap, which is very important; however, we focus on the bottom 1/3 of students, the rest are "fine"; 2/3 of students are expected to be satisfied with what is offered. Our district needs to serve ALL students. Yes, race plays a role in this aspect, but socioeconomic and lack of support at home probably play a bigger role. - Poor academics (lack of rigor) and behavioral reputation at middle school has been a long standing problem that has not been addressed. - Behavioral chaos (wild west) in the bathrooms (vaping lounges) and hallways at the high school. Breakdown of leadership in general. - SLP High School is not the admired "gem" that it once was. Have we asked the families that left why they leave SLP schools? Covid - parents that want kids in school left for private schools, or districts that appeared to have a better handle on hybrid and distance learning. Unhappy families that had the means and flexibility to leave, did. This has always been the case. Should the state give the schools more money? Yes, but I also think there's an opportunity to rethink some of the expenses schools are paying for that should be covered by other sources, specifically, social workers. They should be paid from the health and human services budget (county or state). If we're going to ask for more money we need a complete and transparent review of where we're currently spending our money. I see that we're finally requesting families to fill out the free and reduced lunch forms so the district can be reimbursed. Why haven't we aggressively pursued this money sooner? This has been a problem for a while. A MUCH better marketing campaign is needed if you want this to happen - poor execution. Given that a top priority is equity and closing the achievement gap - What does IB cost the district and how is it directly helping to close the gap? How many families actually choose SLP specifically because of IB, particularly in K-5 and MS. Mtka and Edina are full, and do not have IB. They do the basics very well, have high academic and behavioral standards, offer challenging programs, help focus on bringing every student along, invest in STEM programs and art, etc. As much as I would like to say we do these things, the truth is we do not! We have some great teachers, but are not competitive with offerings that challenge students or programs that keep them engaged, such as elementary science. How are all the new admin positions directly helping to close the achievement gap? Could those dollars be better spent on direct student contact positions? Or STEM instruction? Or art? Or vocational classes? Thank you for letting me contribute.
African or African American	male	We discussed enrollment and the impact on the budget. My thought partner is friends with many other families with children at Aquila. The general sentiment from our discussion is the reduction in enrollment will be temporary. There are temporary shifts that make a lot of sense, particularly in kindergarten where working with kids that age in distance learning is just too much. However, he thought people would be back once schools are in-person. He fully expects that to be the case in the next school year following the distribution of the vaccine. We also discussed budgets and he is concerned about the idea of cutting budgets. He mentioned ideas such as online fundraising to offset some expenses (not sure if this is possible, but worth discussing as I think many families would be open to this). He also mentioned if the school has to pay for technology distributed to kids it should be done based on family income versus providing to all.
African or African American	male	As a student, he was wondering when extracurricular funding will go if sports are canceled because of COVID restrictions. He was also wondering about next year's budget cut and where funds will be "scraped" from.
More than one	female	With the intro of COVID, what has the overall impact been financially? Were there other areas that were negatively affected in order to accommodate changes for covid? And are there funds being allocated (by way of extra hires or other) in order to give extra help to those families that may not be prepared for distance learning?
Hispanic	female	I qualify for free/reduced lunch and I've always wondered how they cover that and how many families actually get the free/reduced lunch?" "Also with that, if you plan on taking AP exams you can qualify for free and so I just wonder how they cover that and how many students who are Hispanic get covered"
More than one	female	- Why has the district added so many administrators in recent years (principals on special assignment, vice principals in elementary schools, an extra HS vice principal, a created position for the former HS principal who is nice but completely ineffective)? Wouldn't this money be better spent on extra teachers and paras who can work with kids to close the gap? - Why are school districts expected to pay for meals, social workers, childcare for essential workers, etc.? Shouldn't these items come out of the MN Dept of Health & Human Services budget instead? When our district spends resources on those things, which are very important but need to be funded differently, there is less money available to spend in classrooms. School district funds should be spent on education, not remedying all of these social problems. Do school district's lobby to get help with these unfunded mandates and needs? - Every student needs to be challenged in every subject, but an increasing number of parents are complaining that inappropriate behavior is being tolerated and their kids are not being challenged (these kids aren't on teachers' radars, because they already exceed state standards). What is the district going to do about losing so many families who have become disenfranchised, and what is the plan to turn this tide so more don't leave, because the loss of these students impacts the bottom line?
More than one	female	How has COVID impacted the schools finances and how has the district been compensating for teachers taking leaves of a absence?
More than one	female	The impact of students.

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Caribbean Descent	female	How will the district pay back the Cares Act? How does this affect taxes? How are renovations determined and at what point is a levy passed?
African or African American	female	Distant learning and effect ono student of color
African or African American	male	At this point my thought partner did not have a ton of questions, but is excited to be involved. A couple topics we discussed to lay the groundwork of future discussions: - What was the impact of distance learning on the budget? With all the uncertainty how can we get enough information to budget for next year? - What type of technology costs do we expect to incur in the next year? If we return to an in-school delivery model, what will happen to the computers provided to kids? Will those be used by the school, kept with the children, returned to a supplier?
Asian and Pacific Islander	male	“Why does the school go easy on students who misbehave and underperform academically? If the policies become all about race, the school will lose sight of true academic achievement. At my school, the material is very hard and the teachers are very strict.”
More than one	male	“The questions worded oddly, but I've been wondering about the COVID-19 budget, how much money we're going to spend on safety stuff.”