

# Executive Summary

A result of the small group work activity

Community Engagement Session (CES) #5 • May 17, 2022

Approximately 90 community members and staff members participated in the **Vision Forward** community engagement session at Benton High School on May 17, 2022. The attendees took part in the session both in-person and virtually via Zoom.

The topic for the fifth **Vision Forward** community engagement program was “Facilities for Learning.” Participants heard a presentation by Superintendent Dr. Doug Van Zyl who provided a brief overview of the previous four sessions. Mr. Mickey Gill, Director of Operations and Mr. Casey Housman, Coordinator of Maintenance and Warehousing then provided information on district facilities. A video featuring St. Joseph employees and students provided first-hand insights on current facilities and their thoughts for future improvements needed.

To view the presentation and the video, visit [VisionForwardsjsd.com](http://VisionForwardsjsd.com). Following the presentation, participants worked in 15 small groups to complete the tasks discussed below. Following is a summary of the responses from the groups. Verbatim responses can be found at [VisionForwardsjsd.com](http://VisionForwardsjsd.com).

Presented below are the most common responses given across the 15 tables (virtual and in-person responses combined) completing work activities.

**Task #1:** *Based on tonight’s presentation, what are two positive things about the St. Joseph School District, its students or staff you could share?*

Positive News to Share	Number of times mentioned
Dedicated teachers and staff who care about students	10
Maintenance staff efforts to provide safe spaces, efficient use of funds	5
Older, historic neighborhood schools	3

Students do their best with what they have	2
Pride in SJSD	2
Students and staff have consensus on needs, hopeful for future	2
Early Childhood Center	2
ACT scores are improving	1
SJSD honors students and staff	1
Do good with resources we have	1
New schools	1

**Suggested High Priority Topics to Align Buildings to Improve Schools**

**Task #2:** What are 3 priorities to align SJSD buildings to improve our facilities for learning? List your top priorities on the chart. Prioritize your top 3 priorities from 1 to 3 - 1 being the highest and 3 being the lowest priority. What recommendations does your group have to address these priorities in the next 5 years?

Presented below are the top priorities ranked by participants:

<b>Top Priorities to Align Buildings to Improve Our Facilities for Learning</b>	<b>Number of times ranked #1, #2 or #3</b>
Consolidate schools, 2 high schools, redistricting, address capacity issues	12
Vision (plan) for future; priorities by staff include in planning	4
Athletic field upgrades	3
Consistent middle school alignment; grades 6-7-8	3
Improve learning environments	3

Consolidate Schools and Capacity

Almost every group identified school capacity and the need to consolidate schools as a top priority. This was overwhelmingly the most identified concern by the participants. Redistricting and a better realignment of K-12 students was also listed as a need to improve

the current feeder pattern especially from elementary to middle school. Several groups wanted to see a simplified feeder system that would help to balance the schools. Comments and suggestions included building two new high schools, combining two elementary schools, building a bigger middle school or one or two new ones.

### Creating a Plan

Several of the groups indicated the need for a vision or a plan for all future improvements. One group recommended that SJSJ staff and students be allowed to help determine future priorities. Participants shared their thoughts about the best ways to implement future improvements. These comments included being creative, developing the best plan for school capabilities and cost to maintain, create the plan and then follow through with it, passing bond issues to finance improvements and making sure the community is well-informed about decisions.

### Athletic Field Upgrades

A few of the groups, 3 of 15, listed the need to improve athletic facilities throughout the district. Equity among the schools was mentioned - equal athletic facilities at each high school campus.

### Grades 6-7-8 Middle Schools

Many of the groups indicated the need for a consistent middle school model throughout the district. Participants suggested realigning schools so all SJSJ middle schools serve students in grades 6-8. Having middle schools for students in grades 6-8 was also included in comments related to capacity, redistricting and improved facilities.

### Improve Learning Environments

Participants also addressed improvements to the overall educational programs within each school suggesting more collaborative learning, developing learning spaces to meet the needs of today's students, having equal opportunities among schools, focusing on all things in the schools (alternative school, management of the school, behavior support for teachers).

## **CONSENSUS POINTS**

### **Points of general agreement from the work activity**

- Finding ways to address the classroom capacity throughout the district and consolidating schools was overwhelmingly the top priority. The participants indicated a desire to improve capacity and cost to maintain schools. Redistricting was listed as a strategy to improve enrollment at schools and to also better align feeder patterns for schools.

- Developing an improvement plan and then making it happen was important to participants. Participants shared a strong hope for the future of St. Joseph schools.
- Participants identified various priorities and strategies to improve the SJSJ educational facilities and programs. Strong support among the groups was shown for moving all middle schools to grades 6-8, improving facilities, including athletic facilities and realigning district boundaries.

**For a complete listing of all responses  
see the CES #5 Verbatim Response Document**