

Executive Summary

A result of the small group work activity

Community Engagement Session (CES) #4 • April 26, 2022

Over 60 community members and staff members participated in the **Vision Forward** community engagement session at Lafayette High School on April 26, 2022. The attendees took part in the session both in-person and virtually via Zoom.

The topic for the fourth **Vision Forward** community engagement program was “*Improving Student Performance - Secondary Level.*” Participants heard a presentation by Dr. Ashly McGinnis, Principal of Lafayette High School. The presentation focused on current criteria, practices and data for St. Joseph School District students in grades 6-12.

To view the presentation, visit VisionForwardsjsd.com. Following the presentation, participants worked in 10 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.

Presented below are the most common responses given across the 10 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
Great teachers and staff	7
Hillyard Technical Center	6
SJSD offers a variety of programs for all types of learning	5
SJSD identifies and addresses needs of students	3
Quality education is attainable	1

SJSD arts program and the ROTC program	1
Volunteers are back in schools	1
SJSD utilizes data-informed decision making	1
ACT scores improved following COVID	1

Suggested High Priority Topics for High School Level

Task #2: What are 3 priorities to be addressed in the area of improving **high school** academic achievement? 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. List your priorities on each of these tables and rank them 1-3. Please share recommendations to address each priority in the next 5 years.

Presented below are the top priorities ranked by participants:

Top Priorities for High School Level Ranked by Participants	Number of times ranked #1, #2 or #3
Attendance	7
Similar course offerings at all schools; more course offerings	5
New start and end times for the school day	5
Improved behavior	5

Attendance

Improving student attendance was without question the top priority for most of the participant groups. Comments related to improving attendance in grades 7-12 were shared by participants at 7 of the 10 tables. Having a strong relationship between the students and advisement teachers and providing opportunities to encourage parent involvement and for parents to return to the schools were recommended. Other suggestions included positive phone calls to the home, focusing on effective strategies used prior to pandemic and improving support by local law enforcement when needed.

Equity in Course Offerings at High Schools

Providing course equity was a priority for half of the groups. The groups listed the need for common course offerings at all high schools, but also increasing course options such as more electives to meet the students' needs and interests. Additional comments included

increasing virtual courses, combining schools and providing additional resources for realignment.

New Start and End Times for School Day

Half of the groups, 5 of 10, suggested a later start time as a priority to improve academic performance by high school students. Adjusting the start time to 8 or 8:30 a.m. was identified as one of the top priorities. Some of the groups offered new scheduling and possible block schedules as options.

Improved Behavior

Finding ways to improve behavior was also listed by half of the groups as a priority. Participants recommended implementation of an internship at each high school, increasing alternative programs and employing social services staff. One group offered the idea of a therapy dog to support students.

Suggested High Priority Topics for Junior High/Middle School:

Task #2: *What are 3 priorities to be addressed in the area of **improving junior high/middle school** academic achievement? 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. List your priorities on each of these tables and rank them 1-3. Please share recommendations to address each priority in the next 5 years.*

Presented below are the top priorities ranked by participants:

Top Priorities for Junior High/Middle School Ranked by Participants	Number of times ranked #1, #2 or #3
Realignment of all grades 6-7-8 to middle school model; team teaching model	12
Attendance	7
Course variety	3

Realignment to Middle School Model

Almost every group listed moving to a middle school model across the district. Realignment of grades 6-8 and focusing on team teaching was identified as a top priority. Participants recommended reevaluating current buildings for usage and capacity, consideration of redistricting and construction of a new middle school to replace Bode.

Attendance

Along with improved attendance at the high school level, finding ways to improve attendance for students in grades 6-8 was also a top priority for a large number of the groups. Seven of the 10 groups listed this as one of their top priorities. Suggestions to help increase student attendance included offering parent training events to better partner with parents to support regular attendance, having additional support at the school level and creating a more positive educational climate.

Expanded Variety of Courses Offered

Several of the groups identified a larger variety of course options for students as a priority. To accommodate the increase in class offerings, it was recommended to evolve the current school structure to include an 8-period day and a modified block schedule to allow for more electives and more time for teacher planning.

CONSENSUS POINTS

Points of general agreement from the work activity

- The community recognizes and highly values the quality and dedication of St. Joseph School District teachers and staff. While seeking ways to improve the education for students, at the same time the participants look at the needs and support of district employees as a top consideration.
- Improving attendance at every grade is one of the most important issues to address in SJSD. The Vision Forward participants indicated an understanding of the need to involve parents and community in partnership with the schools to find ways to improve attendance.
- Participants agreed on the need to reevaluate the current structures of the secondary school programs to find consistency and equity for all students. Moving to a middle school model, focusing on team teaching at the middle school level and offering additional course offerings for students in grades 6-12 was important to participants.

**For a complete listing of all responses
see the CES #4 Verbatim Response Document**