

Executive Summary

A result of the small group work activity

Community Engagement Session (CES) #2 • Feb. 22, 2022

An estimated 165 participants (including 45 SJSD staff members) attended the **Vision Forward** community engagement session on Feb. 22, 2022 in-person and another 37 individuals attended the session online. This time, both the in-person and virtual participants took part in CES#2 on the same night.

The topic for the second **Vision Forward** community engagement program was “*What Matters Most - High Quality Staff in Every Classroom.*” Participants heard a presentation by Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Brian Kraus that focused on recruiting and retention strategies currently in place plus the various challenges the District faces in its efforts to ensure SJSD has high-quality educational employees at all levels.

To view the presentation, visit VisionForwardsjسد.com. Following the presentation, participants worked in 22 small groups to complete the tasks discussed below. Following is a summary of the responses from the groups. Verbatim responses can be found at VisionForwardsjسد.com.

Task #1: *What are your top 5 priorities to be addressed in the area of staffing as we work to develop the Action Plan?*

Presented below are the most common responses given across the 22 tables (virtual and in-person responses combined) completing work activities:

Top Priorities Identified by Participants	Number of times mentioned
Salaries	21
Retaining and recruiting high quality employees	16
Teacher support (support by administration, resources)	15

Facilities	12
Reputation of St. Joseph School District and community	8
Building culture	7
Community involvement and support	6
Student behavior	4
Balanced administration and support staff in schools	2
District finances - reallocated, increased thru referendums, elimination of Sunshine Law requirement	1
Safety	1
Grow Your Own Program recruiting tool	1

Presented below are the priorities ranked as the #1 priority by participants:

Priorities Ranked Number 1 by Participants	Number of times ranked #1
Teacher support (support by administration, resources)	14
Salaries	4
Building culture	2

Task #2: *Prioritize your top five priorities from 1-5 - 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest priority. What recommendations does your group have to address these priorities in the next 5 years?*

Suggested High Priority Topics:

Teacher Support

Finding ways to support teachers was the most common priority listed by attendees. Almost all groups listed some type of additional support for teachers as a priority to improve retention and recruitment. This priority was also ranked as the top priority by most groups. Suggestions included, finding ways to show appreciation, improving trust and

positive relationships with administrators, adding more personnel to provide for student needs (behavioral, tutoring, special services, etc.), having a mentorship program and offering additional professional development opportunities.

Salaries

Related to improved support for teachers, finding ways to bolster salaries for teachers was listed as a priority by 21 of the 22 groups. Several groups listed being below the State average in teacher salaries as a concern.

The attendees suggested offering salaries that were competitive with the state and Kansas City area averages. Other suggestions included offering a new benefits package, adjusting the salary schedule, investigating additional revenue sources, adjusting district funding, and adding to the tax base.

Facilities

Several of the groups identified the need for better SJSD facilities as a needed priority to improve recruiting and retention of staff. This was also listed as a need to improve the overall culture of the schools.

Attendees offered several observations and suggestions related to the overall condition and facility needs of the District. Some attendees shared they found the schools embarrassing compared to others in Kansas City and smaller local schools and the desire to have buildings more competitive with others in the area. Others suggested that everything needs updating including ADA improvements, need for a long-term facility plan to improve or replace schools, a 6th grade center and consolidating and updating underutilized schools.

Reputation of School District and Community

Of the 22 groups, eight specifically identified improving the reputation of the school district and the community as a priority to aid in the recruitment and retention of staff. Suggestions on this topic were also shared in other priorities, too, including community support and involvement.

Attendees offered suggestions on how to begin to change the reputation of the district and the community. Ideas included engaging with the Chamber of Commerce, emphasizing low cost of living and short commutes, providing welcoming facilities, improving the organizational culture, creating new points of pride, focusing on the positive and using newspaper, local TV and social media to highlight successes, achievements and more stories about district employees.

CONSENSUS POINTS

Points of general agreement from the work activity

- Finding strategies to better support teachers was overall an agreed upon priority to improve recruitment and retention of St. Joseph School District staff. Increased salaries was generally considered the top need, however, suggestions to improve the salary offerings were varied.
- Creating a positive and supportive working environment for all district employees, especially teachers, was important to most attendees. Improved administrative relationships, improved facilities and additional support personnel were often suggested.
- Improved facilities to enhance the reputation of the district and improve the work/classroom environment was also agreed to be an important piece of recruiting and retaining staff.

**For a complete listing of all responses
see the CES #2 Verbatim Response Document**