

## **CALEDONIA-MUMFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

The Warner study team employed multiple strategies to collect data regarding the perceptions of stakeholders in the Caledonia Mumford Central School District. These strategies include individual interviews, focus groups with district stakeholders, and administration of a community survey. This report is limited to analysis of the interviews and focus group data.

The team conducted a series of individual interviews with key decision makers within the District. Interview protocols were designed using Bryson and Alston's work on strategic planning in the public and not-for-profit sector. We interviewed individually the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, members of the Board of Education, past President of the Caledonia Mumford Teachers' Association who also serves as part-time athletic director, and the Business Official .

In addition to the interviews, the study team conducted a series of focus group activities in which an analyst posed specific questions gleaned either from the literature on strategic planning or questions geared to specific issues identified by the District. These sessions were repeated multiple times in each of the school buildings for faculty and staff, including members of the transportation department, maintenance/custodial, aides and clerical personnel, and for students in the high school and middle school. Parent opportunities were made available in conjunction with the team's visits to schools during an evening session. Specific opportunities were also made available for members of the transportation department, members of the clerical association, aides, custodial and maintenance department employees, and members of the administrative leadership team. It is notable that we made no effort to control participants other than to make participation accessible and open. An analyst spent a full day in each of the buildings, the elementary, middle school and high school. Additional interviews and focus groups were conducted at the central office building, and the transportation center. Community members were invited to an evening focus group.

In total, four (4) members of the study team interacted with approximately 255 stakeholders of the Caledonia Mumford school community.

We present this report as the responses of interested stakeholders who willingly were part of the process. We informed participants that their comments were intended to be "generally confidential," meaning that no study team member would reveal the identity of any participant nor link a specific job title to a specific response, with the exception of the Superintendent. We could not guarantee, however, that another member of the focus group would not reveal such comments, including the participant's identity. We also could not guarantee that others, when they read the report, would not make assumptions and guesses, both correct and incorrect, as to the source of individual comments.

Sessions ranged in length from approximately 40 minutes to over an hour. At the start of each session, the analyst gave a brief overview of the strategic planning process and the role perceptions played in understanding the issues facing the District.

Focus group members were asked to write their thoughts prior to responding in order to capture every participant's initial answers to questions. The analyst then captured responses one at a time moving from participant to participant, and asking participants if they, too, had the same response. Participants were asked to stay true to the process and only indicate they had the same response if they had, in fact, written it down; in other words, just because a shared responses sounded good, we asked participants to not indicate they simply agreed with the response.

For some questions, we asked participants to quickly respond to a given question with a "rank" from 1-5. For example, we asked parents, "On a scale from one to five, with 1 strongly NO and 5 strongly YES, Do you feel your children are safe in school?" The analyst would then quickly average the responses. These various ranking questions may serve as an invitation to the District to conduct deeper research.

The primary purpose of the perception data is to assist in an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) facing the District; so that the District can effectively plan for the future and to provide the study team with some specific information regarding stakeholder perceptions. The term SWOT is frequently used in the literature to describe this analysis. The perception data, when joined with the survey data, gives decision makers and stakeholders a comprehensive view of perceptions regarding the "state of the District."

**Organization of the report:** As the primary purpose of these data is to inform decision makers in the SWOT analysis, we present data under the general categories of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We identify predominant SWOT, those that were mentioned by many who participated in the focus groups and interviews, as well as secondary SWOT, those that were mentioned by several.

Some areas were identified by respondents as both strengths and weaknesses. It is important to note that according to the work of John Bryson, whose approach we follow in our strategic planning facilitation, "One of the most fascinating features of most SWOT analysis is that the strengths and weaknesses are often highly similar to one another. That is, an organization's greatest strengths may also be its greatest weakness." (Bryson, 95.) This is common not only as we analyze data from group to group, but sometimes within a group. That is because some specific elements genuinely can be viewed as both a strength and a weakness. In other cases, some elements are viewed as a strength by some stakeholders and a weakness by others. We encourage readers to review the entire report before formulating conclusions.

## **Strengths**

Caledonia Mumford is a district that sees itself as a good place for students, faculty, staff, and families. It has deep traditions and a proud past. Although participants were quick to tell us about weaknesses and problems, they demonstrated genuine satisfaction and appreciation for the school and the close-knit community. We emphasize this at the start because the nature of this process tends to focus on weaknesses. That is a good thing. Organizations engage in strategic planning in order to get better, not to stay the same. Stakeholders want improvement. That tends to stack the deck in favor of weaknesses and improvement opportunities. It should not diminish the considerable and deep strengths of the District.

In our interviews and focus groups we defined strengths as follows: *“Internal strengths are resources or capabilities that help a school district accomplish its mission and mandates and create public trust.”*

**Predominant Strengths:** Three (3) predominant strengths of the District were identified in nearly every interview and every group. They include the faculty and staff of the District, the culture and pride of the Caledonia-Mumford District, and while interrelated to the culture, it is important to note a third strength as the size of the District.

**Faculty and Staff:** There was a genuine agreement among all stakeholder groups that the faculty and staff, including administrators, were generally supportive, child-centered, kind and caring. Parents reported that employees were approachable and offered open communication to families, being readily accessible to them. Students felt that teachers were supportive, and there to “give help when you need it.” A sense that all employees truly cared about the students was pervasive and that “there is a caring staff who keep the best interest of kids in mind.” Teachers indicated that the dedication and caring goes well beyond the teaching staff and is practiced by everyone and that all employees are generous with their time in and out of the school day. Specific accolades for the staff included “a group that is cooperative and works as a team no matter where or who you are,” as well as “an administrative team from the Superintendent to the Principals, that is knowledgeable, provides excellent leadership, and makes teachers feel they are supported, with the welfare of students being first and foremost.” Administrators noted that “teachers and staff care about education in general and respect its importance” and that can be seen in the classroom. Of special note was the sense from the support staff that teachers made them feel needed, something that we don’t often hear. In return many commented on the helpfulness of the support staff in working with the students, in transporting the students and in maintenance of the buildings.

**Culture and Pride:** Red Raider Pride and the Cal-Mum Way were phrases heard often with all stakeholder groups. There is a true feeling that the traditions of the District and the loyalty to the District are perhaps its strongest asset, appreciated by all stakeholders. A comment made by the administrative team was that “it is cool for students to be here and to be smart, athletic and involved in the arts.” Administrators talked about the “Cal-Mum Way” as the focus for their work in the district. They indicated it is “why we are special, setting high expectations of students and staff.” They noted a general message of “You will do well; you cannot give up; it is not

accepted,” is felt by all staff in the district. On several occasions, teachers reported on their pride in the opportunities found in the District. Students focused on Red Raider Pride, specifically in relation to the sports program which they cited as one of the most significant strengths of the District. Along with the importance of their sports program, students mentioned that “we all know each other and support each other,” which they indicated was another definer of Red Raider Pride. Students also talked about pride in the sense of the community coming together during a tragedy; “The whole community comes together to help families.”

Tied to the culture and pride within the school district is a sense of pride in the community. Again, as a significant strength, parents indicated that we are a “small community – everyone knows one another.” Parents felt that positive community involvement could be seen by attendance at school events, support of fundraisers, and the successful passage of the budget. Faculty reported a connection to the community through a variety of outreach programs. The District was referred to as Mayberry – a small school community with a strong faculty/student community bond. Teachers noted that there is never a problem getting the community to support and be involved.

Of interest however, is the fact that the deeply ingrained pride was also noted as a weakness among some stakeholders. There was a sense that because of those deep roots the district was slow to change, and few were willing to “rock the boat.” There was a sense that we have always done it this way and it’s been okay, so why change. We discuss this further under weaknesses.

**Size:** As noted in comments above, the small size of the district was seen by each group as a significant strength. (Please note that it was also seen as a significant weakness which will be discussed later). Because of the size of the District all stakeholders shared that “we all know each other, watch out for each other, and students do not fall through the cracks”. “There is a culture of acceptance.” The size allows for individual attention for the students, and faculty noted that students “are treated as individuals in education and discipline.” While the size of the school district itself is seen as a strength, it is important to note that there is a disconnect in the perception of class size. It was reported by administrators and in recent BEDS data the class sizes in the elementary school are less than 23 at each grade level. However, in some stakeholder groups large class sizes were reported as a weakness.

**Secondary Strengths:** Whereas a strong faculty and staff, unwavering community pride and small size were almost always cited as strengths of the District, there were also a number of other areas that were frequently cited, but not with the consistency of the predominant strengths. However, as noted, some of these strengths were also listed as weaknesses.

**Technology:** Technology was seen as a secondary strength and a secondary weakness. The Board of Education members made note of a recent technology upgrade, and parents indicated that technology is used in instruction and communication. Faculty cited technology infrastructure and access to personal devices by students. They also noted that there was professional development available to them to enhance the use of technology. It was stated in

several groups that the technology they were referring to was the use of the automated phone messaging system and voice mail system, not necessarily 1:1 devices or specific programs to enhance instruction. Several focus groups talked about the use of iReady, an adopted assessment tool, as a beneficial use of technology; however students at the middle school labeled iReady as “babyish” noting it doesn’t match what they are doing in class and takes too much time.

**Staff turnover:** It was mentioned by four (4) different groups that the lack of teacher turnover was a strength in the District. Faculty noted that their group was made up of many veteran teachers, pointing to the level of expertise as a true benefit. Stability in the administrative team was also seen as a strength.

**Administrative team:** The administrative team was singled out in comments by several of the focus groups. Specifically, the Superintendent was identified as a strength, as was his willingness to try new things for the District. Principals were recognized as being “solid, analytical, perfect for their job.” Also noted was the fact that several administrators have multiple roles and responsibilities but generally manage to get the job done. Administrators were also praised for their visibility and approachability by support staff and parents, as well as their caring for the students and employees.

**Safety:** There was a general perception of safety in the district. Specifically, two focus groups commended the transportation department for their safety record and willingness to know their students. Administrators were confident in the emergency preparedness protocol that the district has developed. Parents indicated that they felt their children were safe at school and on the bus.

**Facilities:** Teachers spoke of a general sense of pride in the facilities of the district. Several groups spoke of the new athletic facilities. Students mentioned the new bathroom facilities as well. It was noted that buildings were clean and well-cared for.

**Professional Development:** Teachers indicated that there were ample professional development opportunities and believed that the District provided support in areas that the teachers felt were important. Specifically, professional development focusing on the use of technology was mentioned. Support staff also indicated they had access training and workshops. Also mentioned were opportunities offered to parents for training.

The district’s 3-year mentorship program for new teachers was noted as a strength by teachers and administrators. The program begins with a year-one mentoring followed by a two-year induction program with professional development on a personalized level for new employees.

**Board of Education:** There was a general sense among some of the focus groups that the Board of Education was supportive and worked well together for the betterment of the students. One group indicated that the “administration and the Board of Education were second to none.” Teachers noted Board support for programs offered despite declining enrollment.

**Other Strengths:** There were other strengths identified by stakeholders on a more individual basis.

- A teacher's union that has a good relationship with staff, is active approachable and community based
- Good selection of opportunities, including advanced placement and Genesee Community College coursework
- Block scheduling
- Communication for the buildings
- School Resource Officer
- Pre-K program
- Sports program
- Project Lead the Way
- Coaches
- Hiring process
- Doing intentional work to improve
- Facilities
- Business office is easy to approach
- Staff live in community
- Trust
- Common goal

### **Weaknesses**

In our interviews we defined weakness as follows: "Internal weaknesses are deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder a school district's ability to meet its mandates, fulfill its mission and create public trust."

**Predominant Weaknesses:** There were several areas that were recognized as weaknesses of the school district. These include issues regarding the changing demographics and enrollment and their impact on the District, scheduling in all buildings but predominantly at the secondary buildings, programs to meet the needs of *all* students, and staffing.

**Changing Demographics and Enrollment:** Every adult group interviewed discussed the changing demographics of the community, as well as the decrease in enrollment, as a major weakness for the District. Respondents felt that with the increase in poverty that is seen, comes a decrease in the number of residents who value a strong educational program. Along with this comes low parent involvement in the schools and a concern that the District is unable to offer programs that meet the changing social/emotional needs of the students.

The significant decrease in enrollment was blamed on a lack of community development, with no new housing and therefore no growth. Housing that exists was said to be deteriorating, making the housing market unattractive for new families. Those who reside in the district tend

to stay in the district, creating an aging population with no children enrolled in the school system. Respondents also felt that with a small school comes less money and therefore fewer opportunities for the students.

**Scheduling:** Students, staff and parents told us that an overarching impact on the ability to meet the needs of the students is the master schedule, especially at the secondary level. Issues that come about as a result of the schedule include limited time to meet with teachers for extra help, inability to share staff, the length of the school day, scheduled class conflicts limiting student opportunity, limited elective offerings, and limited or no time for teacher co-planning.

At the middle and high school buildings students and staff arrive and leave at virtually the same time, leaving no time for students to work with teachers outside of the scheduled day. Parents indicate this issue has occurred due to one very long bus run coupled with the teachers' start and end times per contract.

The actual teaching schedule was mentioned by teachers and students as problematic in all buildings. At the elementary school teachers noted there is no passing time between assignments, making it very difficult for traveling teachers to get materials out and ready as these teachers are moving between rooms. Elementary teachers also voiced concern that the length of the day was not instructionally appropriate for the developmental age of the students. It was suggested that scheduling models had been developed when the district moved to longer days but were not implemented.

At the secondary buildings two schedules are operational, making it difficult to share any staff between the middle and high schools. Class conflicts, especially between AP courses and electives were also noted. Students at the high school and middle school levels told us that the class blocks are too long, and some students have too many study halls. "It's hard to concentrate for that long, we need to be able to move around," reported a middle school student, with agreement from others. When asked the one thing they would change about their school, the students overwhelming response was the schedule, with suggestions to look at start time, time given between classes, length of lunchtime, and the length of the blocks. Additionally, teachers noted that the flex time at the high school was not being used as designed and the lack of flex time at the middle school and elementary school was problematic. Teachers also told us that there was no collaboration time, time for co-planning or time for team or grade-level meetings during the school day.

**Programming:** In some ways programming and scheduling went hand in hand as respondents talked about weaknesses. Also, closely associated with programming are the fiscal realities of the district. Parents and students report a desire to add other languages and electives and to offer a full continuum of services in special education. Each of these requests is impacted by scheduling as well as the ability to hire staff.

Again, when asked if they could change just one thing many students responded they would like more foreign language offerings, with French being specifically named. Parents indicated they

would like more advanced placement offerings, as well as varied electives, including an additional foreign language. However, they did note that the addition of these would cause conflict within the master schedule.

Parents and teachers spoke about services and programs for those needing special education and support services. Parents told us that there appears to be limited understanding of special education laws and programs and that a full continuum of services should be offered. Teachers agreed with the lack of programming and understanding for special education students, and felt that it was important to hire an administrator who was solely dedicated to special education programs and Committee on Special Education duties. Additionally, teachers asked for guidance with co-teaching, as well as a means to determine if the current programming was meeting the needs of the students.

Teachers noted that student reading levels, particularly at the secondary levels were low, and only one reading teacher was available for student remediation. Parents added their belief that the District changes programs too frequently and it impacts a child's academic abilities, particularly in reading. "Our reading program is either non-existent, not strong, or the flavor of the month," reported members of the parent focus group. Along with this were beliefs from all adult focus groups that the changing demographics were also causing a need for remedial and special education programs, coupled with emotional support.

**Staffing:** All adult focus groups told us that there were a variety of staffing needs within the District. Support staff indicated they operated with a skeleton crew in all areas, and were called on to do many jobs. Also mentioned often was the belief that the Administrative team was stretched too thin, primarily the Middle School Principal who also serves as CSE chairperson. Also mentioned consistently was a need for additional mental health providers, from a social worker to a school psychologist to a counselor, one specifically focused on drug and alcohol counseling. An additional concern of all is the lack of substitute teachers, perhaps because of low pay and no internal process to recruit additional substitutes.

Lack of support personnel was also noted as a deficiency of the district. Specifically mentioned was the lack of aide support, particularly in the elementary school. Secretarial support in the business office was described as "thin" by several.

**Secondary Weaknesses:** While the above represent significant weaknesses voiced by focus groups, other weaknesses were also voiced by many.

**Programming:** Although secondarily to those previously discussed in this report, was a need for more enrichment opportunities for the most able learners within the district, as well as programs focusing on college and career readiness opportunities for secondary students.

**Curriculum development, alignment and professional-development:** Concern was voiced by several of the focus groups that the district was over-dependent on the Common Core



modules. It was noted that the District adopted the modules and are now asking teachers to use the modules as a resource and not the be all to end all. The belief that teachers are not confident in creating their own curriculum was voiced. It was the opinion of the parent group that the modules did not focus enough on the whole child and that the social-emotional needs were ignored. Teachers at the elementary level felt that curriculum was not aligned within a grade level; "not everyone was doing the same thing." They voiced the concern that there were no curricular maps and that the pacing charts did not allow for depth of instruction. Along with this was a feeling from teachers that they did not have the opportunity to gain training to improve their own instructional practice, including meeting the needs of students with social emotional difficulties and trauma. Training needs were identified by members of the transportation department as well.

**Technology:** Although noted also as a strength of the District, technology also came up often as a weakness. It was voiced by parents that there was no standard for the use of technology as a teaching and communication tool. Some teachers use technology readily and consistently, while others do not use it at all or use it ineffectively. It was noted that there is no professional development when new forms of technology are introduced for use. Students shared that one major area for improvement would be better Chromebooks for their use.

**College and Career Readiness:** Opportunities for secondary students to have exposure to programs to promote college and career readiness was mentioned in the focus groups. While additional rigorous course offerings were noted as a necessary component, it was suggested that shadowing, mentoring and internships would be valuable. Respondents also voiced concern over the expectations of students at the secondary level, noting that it "appears okay for students to graduate and go to unskilled jobs." Members of the Board of Education felt it important to tap into opportunities with BOCES to better prepare students for skilled employment. Parents felt that there was a lack of communication regarding opportunities for college preparation.

**Communication:** As we find in many districts we work with, the area of communication was brought forth as a weakness. This came about in a variety of focus groups, in a variety of ways. Some voiced concern about communication of expectations to teachers from the administrative team; about the absence of opportunity to communicate within their departments, teams and grade levels; and about lack of or inconsistent communication from teachers to parents. Others, particularly members of the transportation department who meet students twice daily, voiced concern over getting information about students in crisis.

**The Cal-Mum Way:** Many talked of a reticence to make changes. People talked of the strong pride and heritage found within the District as both a strength and weakness, in this case impeding the ability to move forward. Teachers noted that veterans in the teaching staff did not like to make changes in curriculum, schedule, or grade level assignment but felt that the District had to recognize the changing needs of students each year and force such change as appropriate.

**Other Weaknesses:** There were a multitude of weaknesses noted by either a few or single persons participating in the focus groups. Most are listed below:

- Inconsistent student discipline and rules
- Class size
- Board of Education decisions seem to be a rubber stamp
- Contracts are pro-teacher and other bargaining units are left out
- Dispatcher needs CDL training to be able to assist
- Safety at stadium area during events
- Emergency drill days are not realistic
- Facilities are not clean
- School lunches – quality and quantity
- Athletic coaches ability to engage all
- State testing
- No long-term plan or vision
- Lack of trust for teachers as professionals
- Lack of follow through with high absenteeism
- Elementary School meetings are not productive
- Outdated facilities
- Lack of technology support, particularly at the elementary level
- Need a pool
- Lack of diversity
- BOE too big hearted
- Lack of opportunities to merge or partner with others
- Lack of proper equipment or space especially for art or technology
- Part-time teachers do not have planning or team time and are hard to retain
- Technology infrastructure
- i-Ready
- Kindergarten and high school students bussed together

### **Opportunities**

In our interviews we defined opportunities as, “Outside factors or situations that the school district can take advantage of to better fulfill its mission.”

**Predominant Opportunities:** A general theme of opportunities evolved in all groups and focused on the need to create additional partnerships with other districts, community, and higher education institutions. Additionally, investigating the use of alternative funding sources such as grants was mentioned.

**Shared services:** Teachers, parents and Board members encouraged looking to other, neighboring districts to enhance the shared service model already employed in the athletic program. Working with neighboring schools to offer additional club opportunities for students at all grades was also offered as a suggestion. Continued cooperation with municipalities, looking for ways to expand shared services was suggested.

**Vocational services:** It was noted by several focus groups the need to take advantage of the training and services offered through the Genesee Valley BOCES vocational program for teachers and students. An example was the Teacher Resource Center programs and opportunities.

**Partnerships:** Being creative in looking at partnerships that will open opportunities for students was recommended. Organizations such as Rochester museums and historical sites, music schools and organizations, and colleges for student visitations and learning were discussed. Opportunities offered by county organizations such as Cornell Cooperative Extension parenting classes were mentioned. Also noted as an opportunity for both a partnership and an internship was looking at high school students working with elementary students.

**Internships, work study, job shadowing:** The lack of opportunities for students to get real-life experiences was noted as a weakness of the District, but also as an opportunity. It was suggested that it may be necessary to reach beyond the Caledonia-Mumford community however.

**Alternate funding:** Looking for grant opportunities is often mentioned during focus groups. While it was mentioned here, it was also noted that obtaining and managing grants is not a simple task. Additionally, reaching out to alumni and local businesses to make donations was offered as an opportunity.

**Other opportunities:**

- Community center
- Long distance learning
- Explore other discipline approaches
- Use building space more efficiently
- Investigate best practice in area schools
- Social worker liaison between home and school
- Professional development from outside sources, not always Cal-Mum professionals
- Psychology interns
- Senior citizen volunteers
- College student volunteers
- Provide before and after school day care
- Involvement with the TIG consortium
- Merger options
- Project Lead the Way with younger students
- Unified athletic team
- Study Skills instruction
- Using technology for communication: sensible tweeting
- STEAM opportunities
- Technology in the hands of our youngest learners
- Look at initiatives for air purifying systems
- Concussion management

- Reinvent the high school
- Offer incentive to improve staff and teacher attendance
- Shared special education services
- Allow tuition students

### **Threats**

We defined threats as, “External threats and challenges are factors that can affect our school district in a negative way, making it harder to fulfill its mission.”

**Predominant Threats:** Many of the threats discussed in the focus groups have already been noted in the areas of weakness. They fall into 4 general categories: fiscal concerns, declining enrollment, changing demographics and lack of community improvement.

**Fiscal Concerns:** Noted here, just as it was noted as a weakness, was the District’s dependence on state aid, as well as the tax cap regulation and its impact on financial sustainability. Unfunded mandates were also a concern and were both directly and indirectly tied to general concerns about area legislators and the government. Voiced as a threat was the inequality of the dispersion of funds from Albany, a lack of support for education at the national level, and the inability to do much about it.

**Declining Enrollment:** Of grave concern to all adult focus group members was the impact a declining enrollment will have on the District. The District population is shrinking and with that will come some major decisions on staffing, program, and building space.

**Changing Demographics:** As found in school districts across the country a growing threat to the Caledonia-Mumford District is the changing demographics found in the outlying community thus the entire school community. Poverty levels are growing, and with this comes a variety of threats to a school environment. Mentioned as a threat along with the changing demographics was the changing family dynamics – lower income, high mobility, parents with needs, grandparents raising children, single parent homes, and changing parental roles. Added to this was the threat of an aging community who lack the understanding and support for the school district because they have no direct contact. Also noted in changing demographics was an influx of ENL (English as a New Language) students to the district and the needs they bring with them. Several respondents noted that the population has become transient, changing the sense of belonging and culture.

**Lack of community improvement:** One of the loudest concerns and threats we heard from all adult focus groups was the lack of a sewer system within the Caledonia-Mumford community and its impact on attracting new construction and new residents. Along with that is the decline in local business inasmuch as they will not move in with the few utilities offered.

**Secondary Threats:** Mentioned frequently were other threats to the Caledonia-Mumford School District.

**Increased drug use:** While most noted that this is not a Caledonia-Mumford only issue, the impact of drug use among students was identified as a serious threat. Coupled with this was a concern that the District does not have a designated counselor for drug and alcohol prevention and counseling.

**Staffing:** With declining enrollment comes a need for staffing reductions. Teachers noted that the pressure of “do I have a job or not” causes poor staff morale that impacts school buildings. Along with staffing comes hiring. There is a general concern that Caledonia-Mumford does not attract healthy, competent people who want to make education a career. Noted was a slow hiring process, a small hiring pool, and a need to entice the best and brightest into education in general.

**Other threats:** Mentioned only a few times or singularly were the following threats:

- Safety on the roadways with more drivers ignoring bus flashing lights
- Safety with students – what is in their backpack? Training for weapons?
- Cleanliness of facilities
- Homeless legislations
- Lack of available drivers
- Private schools
- Home schooling
- Too small
- No place to work
- LeRoy and Avon continue to grow but we do not
- Increasing number of families who owe money to school lunch program
- APPR
- State testing
- Community aspirations are too narrow, no one “dreams” for their children
- Continual changes to the common core
- Social media influence
- Peer pressure
- Lack of parent involvement
- Fewer staff members leads to fewer available coaches
- How to make athletic teams competitive with decreasing enrollment
- Impending staff turn-over
- Crowding on the bus
- Decrease in voter turnout

### **Additional Thoughts**

Additional questions were asked of specific focus groups. Those questions and the perceptions of participants follows.

**Three Groups of Students:** Teachers were given three groups of students, high achievers, struggling students, and average students. Each group was “defined.” They were asked which group the District served best and which group the District served least well.

The **secondary teacher** groups did not reach consensus but instead offered reasons for their beliefs:

- High achievers are served best because of the availability of electives and ability to earn college credit
- Struggling learners are served best because they get the most attention.
- High achievers are served least well because people believe they are fine, do what is asked and are, therefore, not challenged to their full potential; too much competition within the District to graduate within the top 10 .
- Struggling learners are served least well because, although they are identified early nothing changes. IEPs are interpreted differently by different administrators; these students are difficult to motivate.

The **elementary teacher** groups felt that struggling students at the secondary level were served least well because of an absence of reading support, no emphasis on career, and many fall through the cracks. Additionally, the elementary teacher groups felt that high performing students at the elementary were served least well because teachers teach to the middle and support the neediest students.

**Administrators** were asked the same question. Again, the group was split with three administrators believing that Caledonia-Mumford serves the higher achieving students best and three administrators indicating that Caledonia-Mumford serves the struggling students best. Administrators comments were:

- Everyone sets high expectations so they teach at a high level meeting the needs of high achievers.
- We are good at teaching to the average.
- We give our struggling learners the opportunity to be successful through athletics which becomes the bring spot of their day.
- Adult connections through athletics assists struggling learners.

When asked which group Cal-Mum serves least well, the administrator’s responses were again split, and their comments were:

- We track too early. A 6<sup>th</sup> grade student should not be tracked to participate or not participate in AP classes.
- [We are] not preparing our students for high performing post-secondary schools.
- We don't really challenge high achievers do we?
- [I] cannot select because I think we serve all well.

**Rating the District:** Both teacher and administrator focus group participants were asked to rate the district in 4 areas, using a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being highest and 1 being lowest. The four questions were:

1. How effective is the district's professional development program?
2. How effectively are support services such as reading and math support aligned with classroom instruction?
3. Does the district use data to guide instructional practice?
4. Does the district use assessment effectively?

Results are shown in the table that follows.

Question	Administrators Average (N = 7)	Secondary Teachers Average (N = 38)	Elementary Teachers Average (n = 40)
#1	2.9	3.7	2.9
#2	2.08	1.6	3.2
#3	3.3	3.4	3.3
#4	2.67	3.3	2.8

**Model of Classroom Assessment:** In addition to rating the District in four areas, teachers and administrators were asked if there was a model of classroom assessment used in the District. Responses were:

- No mandated assessment
- A variety of things
- No
- Rubrics
- Teacher assessment

- Modules
- Danielson rubric
- No – do as always done
- Continuous and ongoing assessments – iReady, Socratic seminars, peer evaluation in the classroom
- Strong path in assessing writing, clearly defined, not nailed down yet
- None
- Need an authentic, meaningful assessment with team scoring, don't have it
- Work in progress, 3 – 5 year plan: starting with standards based report cards and moved to data binders.

**Improving the District:** Finally, teachers and administrators were asked what to provide one thing the district could do to improve instruction:

- Focus on student engagement (4 responses)
- Want them to come to school excited and to feel bad when they aren't here
- Create a clear idea of where the district is going and who is responsible
- Increase funding
- Hire more teachers to be able to spread out special education kids
- Meet needs of students appropriately – based on their need and not the budget. Provide the services that match their needs.
- Realize the needs of students and how they are changing. So many need additional support that is not there, leading to frustration by all at all levels (students, parents, teachers).
- Know that every classroom community is different and might have different needs
- Encourage and support teachers to use tools and resources to best benefit their specific class
- Attend to the special ed population. Support the neediest of students well without confusion and indecision
- Consider needs of children over pressure from state
- Provide more academic support
- Provide more support at primary level for changing needs of students plus higher emphasis on academics
- Be flexible, place people where the need is even if move buildings
- Trust your teacher to be the best they can be and appreciate them truly for all their love of what they do
- Write down suggestions from staff that are given during meetings about instruction
- Listen to teachers' ideas and suggestions
- Provide better support/direction for integration of content areas
- Provide instructional support and practices
- Make all teacher more accountable for district expectations (math)
- Have a clear consistent message - modules or teaching standards (2)
- Communicate instructional goals and support



- Administration needs to decide on curriculum and materials, communicate this to curriculum leaders, who communicate to teachers. If a teacher doesn't follow curriculum or use materials the administrator needs to approach teacher and get things back on the right path
- Teach instructional coaching strategies
- Every teacher needs to be willing to provide AIS support services and enrichment opportunities
- Partnership for training teachers for what will work with students
- Allow teachers to do more professional development
- Integrate content areas
- Departmentalize upper elementary classes so teachers can focus on curricular areas to make instruction more engaging, specific to individual needs, and encompassing of new standards that include technology
- Aides in primary classrooms
- Be more flexible with kids, teachers scheduling (2)
- Increase planning time with classroom teachers and support staff for co-teaching
- Align co-teachers with same planning time
- Foster a general community of collaboration
- Make grade-level collaboration a priority
- Increase communication throughout district
- Make flex time more effective
- Restructure special education, reinstitute 15:1 classroom
- Balance class schedules and class size
- Improve reading by additional reading teacher 6 – 12
- Change master schedule
- Create an after school block
- Hire more staff -spread too thin
- Professional development in reading at elementary school
- Literacy coaching for all
- Flex after school
- Do not have students and teachers dismiss at the same time
- Need more modern equipment, update resources, modify classroom space
- Give science and social studies same amount of instructional time as ELA and math
- Have consistent expectations for what instruction should look like for all teachers
- Define consequences if expectations not met

**Rating by Board and Parents:** The Board of Education and parent focus groups were asked to rate the following questions 1 – 5, with 5 being highest and 1 being lowest.

1. There are ample opportunities for parent involvement.
2. My child is safe in school.
3. My child is safe on the school bus.
4. District communication with parents is effective.
5. Rate the quality of the educational program at Cal-Mum.

Results are shown below:

Question	BOE Average N = 7	Parent Average N = 24
#1	3.0	3.54
#2	4.0	3.53
#3	4.0	3.89 (9 did not answer)
#4	2.86	3.21
#5	4.57	3.04