PCSD

Parma City School District

FOCUS GROUP

Data Analysis











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Methodology

The development of the Parma City Schools Strategic Plan aimed to gather comprehensive insights from various stakeholders within the district to identify key strengths, challenges and areas of focus. This multi-faceted approach ensured a broad and inclusive perspective to inform the strategic planning process.

Data Collection Methods:

1. **Focus Groups:**

- Participants: The focus groups engaged a diverse range of stakeholders, including Elementary, Middle and High School Teachers and Staff, Parents and Guardians, Early Education Staff, Classified Staff, Principals and Middle and High School Students.
- Format: These sessions were conducted both in person and virtually to accommodate participants' varying schedules and preferences and ensure broad participation.
- Objective: The focus groups aimed to provide qualitative insights into each stakeholder group's experiences, perceptions and suggestions, offering depth and context to the district's issues and opportunities.

2. **Individual Interviews:**

- Participants: In-depth interviews were held with the mayors of the three cities that constitute the district: Seven Hills, Parma and Parma Heights.
- Objective: These interviews sought to understand the unique perspectives of local government leaders on the district's role and performance within the broader community context and their vision for the future of education in the area.

3. **Surveys:**

- Public Survey: A survey targeting parents and community members was disseminated, garnering 807 responses. This tool was designed to capture a wide array of opinions, attitudes and perceptions regarding the district's current state and desired future direction.
- Staff Survey: A survey emailed to district staff received 418 responses. This survey aimed to understand the internal perspective on the district's working environment, educational practices and organizational culture.

Data Analysis:

- **Qualitative Analysis:** Responses from focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, sentiments and suggestions across the various stakeholder groups.
- **Quantitative Analysis:** Survey responses were analyzed using statistical tools to quantify satisfaction levels, perceived priorities and the demographic distribution of opinions and attitudes.

Methodology

Integration of Findings:

- Stakeholder Feedback Synthesis: Insights from the different methods were analyzed to highlight major theme areas, divergent views and unique insights, ensuring a balanced representation of stakeholder voices in the strategic plan.
- Strategic Framework Development: The aggregated data informed the development of a strategic framework, addressing key areas such as educational excellence, community engagement, infrastructure improvement and inclusivity.

Conclusion:

The methodology for developing the Parma City Schools Strategic Plan was designed to ensure a comprehensive, inclusive, evidence-based approach to strategic planning. By leveraging a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the planning process was enriched with a multi-dimensional understanding of the district's strengths, challenges and opportunities from the perspectives of a broad spectrum of stakeholders. This approach facilitated the creation of a well-informed and community-aligned strategic plan poised to guide the district toward its envisioned future.

Focus Group Themes & Trends

Strengths

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Consistently highlighted as a strength, the CTE program is well-regarded across different groups for its wide variety of offerings and opportunities.
- **Community and Teacher Engagement:** Parma City Schools has a strong sense of community and history, and teachers are frequently noted for going above and beyond, being committed and being closely attuned to student needs.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Multiple groups appreciated the range of educational paths available, including College Credit Plus, extracurricular activities and specialized programs like ACES and music programs.

Communication Challenges

- A common theme across nearly all focus groups is the challenge of effective communication, particularly regarding timely and accessible information for parents and students. Suggestions included standardized communication methods, a general district app and printed newsletters for broader community reach.

Facilities and Infrastructure

- Concerns about the physical state of school facilities, including maintenance issues and the adequacy of spaces for learning and extracurricular activities, were frequently mentioned. There's a call for updated and maintained facilities to support a conducive learning environment.

Focus Group Themes & Trends

Inclusivity and Integration

- The need for a more inclusive environment, especially for neurodiverse and special education students, was emphasized, and suggestions for better integration practices and support were made.

Student Needs and Well-being

- Student feedback highlighted concerns about stress, the need for more welcoming support services (e.g., nursing staff) and the desire for a more accommodating and understanding approach to student challenges and disciplinary measures.
- Addressing the diversity of student needs, including language barriers and equitable access to programs and resources, was identified as an area for improvement.

Policy and Administrative Concerns

- Issues related to administrative policies, such as the perceived ineffectiveness of specific disciplinary measures, were raised, suggesting a need for policy review and adjustment.

Community Engagement and Support

- The variance in community support was noted as a challenge. There's a desire for increased community engagement and a more unified school support system.

Principals

Strengths:

Guiding Questions:

- What do we do well?
- What is cause for celebration?
- What do you brag about?

- **Instructional Leadership:** The curriculum is considered good, resources are ample and instruction is consistent across the board.
- **Commitment:** There is a collective commitment to the improvement and development of the whole child, with a focus on trauma-informed care.
- **Accessibility of Administration:** Administrators are approachable and available for answers, showing that leaders are invested and people are committed to being part of the district.
- **Teaching Staff:** The teaching staff is recognized as amazing and knowledgeable, with principals supporting each other.
- **Resilience:** The group highlighted their grit and ability to get things done, along with showcasing positives on social media, building community partnerships and offering diverse programs like CTE.

Principals

Weaknesses/Challenges

Guiding Questions:

- What are the areas you wish to improve?
- What areas require deeper planning and/or resource allocation?



- **Board Communications:** Issues with information from the board affecting staff and community.
- **Transportation:** Challenges with communication, process and logistics, including children being on the wrong bus or not bused at all in some cases.
- **Central Office Clarity:** Uncertainty about responsibilities and the sense that the Central Office might be overwhelmed.
- **Facilities:** The need for better facilities, including air conditioning, windows and instructional spaces conducive to learning.
- **Support for English Learners (EL) Teachers:** A call for more support for teachers dealing with students who speak Ukrainian and other languages, suggesting a person in each building or a newcomers program.
- **Hiring Practices:** Concerns about the timing of hiring due to union contracts and the need for more consistent staffing levels.
- **Social Emotional Support:** The need for in-house resources to deal with violent and physical behaviors among students, possibly dedicating a building for students with challenging behaviors for more efficient resource use.
- **Security:** A need for more School Resource Officers (SROs) and improvements in physical security in older buildings.
- **Staff Support:** Suggestions for creating spaces for staff to take breaks, improving social-emotional health support, updating bathrooms and ensuring buildings are conducive to learning.

CULTURAL ASPIRATIONS



At Parma City Schools, we are…

- Clean
- Fun
- Supportive
- Kind
- Trusted
- Proactive
- A place where people smile
- Authentic
- Genuine

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS



At Parma City Schools, we…

- Create a sense of belonging
- Greet each other
- Support each other
- Are aware of our body language (smile – eye contact)
- Collaborate
- Deal with conflict productively and professionally
- Listen

Focus Group Themes & Trends

STAFF







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Focus Group Themes & Trends
STAFF

Strengths

- **CTE Program:** The district CTE program is available to all students and integrates CTE with college courses.
- **Academics:** Respondents praised the school for its academic improvements, which have made it a district with hard-working staff who genuinely care about the students.
- **Quality Staff:** There's a strong sense of resilience and unity among the staff, leading to successful graduates and a very inclusive, diverse environment.
- **Merger:** The transition from the merger was handled well, with a strong relationship with administrators and consistent professional development supported by the superintendent.

Challenges and Weaknesses

- **Teacher Uncertainty:** Teachers often move regarding location, subjects and grade levels, preventing mastery and stability. The closing of buildings and potential changes in the School Board have created nervousness among teachers.
- **Community Support:** A perceived lack of community support is highlighted by failed levy votes and tensions between district cities.
- **Teacher Morale:** Teacher morale is dropping due to various strains, including threats from social media and attendance issues.
- **Administrative Support:** Staff highlighted perceived micromanagement from principals and communication issues within the district administration.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** Issues like plumbing, bathroom conditions, inconsistent classroom temperatures and inadequate facilities were highlighted. Concerns about overcrowded and understaffed conditions emphasized the need for building and infrastructure improvements.

Communication

- **External Communication**: Respondents noted that communication has improved with the use of social media and newsletters. However, there are missed opportunities to reach certain stakeholder groups that aren't tech-savvy, and each community may require a tailored communication strategy.
- **Internal communication:** Staff noted that internal communication is inconsistent but improving.

Safety and Mental Health

- **Security:** There is a desire for a continued focus on security with SROs and increased building security and upgrades.
- **Mental Health:** The district is trying to address mental health needs, but resources are limited. More support staff are needed, as present personnel are currently overwhelmed.

Focus Group Themes & Trends

PARENTS







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Strengths

- **CTE & Accelerated Learning Programs:** Parents praised the in-house CTE and STEM programs, highlighting their early start and a wide variety of offerings. The College Credit Plus opportunities and PAGE program for gifted students were noted for providing individualized attention and quality education.
- **Teaching Staff:** The high quality of the teaching staff and their dedication to students' education.

Challenges and Weaknesses

- **Community Divide:** A significant concern was raised regarding the difficulty of securing community support. There is a perception of lingering tension from old issues between the districts' communities, hindering the community's support of the district. Unity and an improved perception of the district as a whole are needed.
- **Community Support:** Suggestions to improve the district's relationship with the community were made, including strengthening connections with local businesses, expanding after-school programming and formally investigating organizations offering such services.
- **Student Mental Health Needs:** Concerns about the district's ability to meet student's increasing mental health needs, as well as the significant behavioral challenges that many students exhibit.
- **Inconsistency Between Buildings:** Concerns about inconsistent experiences across different schools.

Focus Group Themes & Trends
PARENTS

Communication

- **District Recognition:** Parents feel the public doesn't recognize the district's accomplishments sufficiently due to missed information and accessibility issues.
- **Simplified Information Access:** There's a need for more straightforward access to information, especially regarding board meetings and specific details for Special Education.
- **EL Support:** The challenge of connecting with EL students and their families and the inconsistency in communication channels were highlighted.
- **Communication Challenges:** Respondents mentioned challenges regarding the complexity and number of communication channels.

Mental Health

- The inconsistency in mental health and social-emotional support across different schools was a concern. Some parents noted the lack of a unified approach and perceived insufficient counselor support.

Hopes and Wishes for the Future

- **Improved Facilities:** Parents expressed a desire for upgraded facilities.
- **Community Unity:** Parents expressed a desire for the community to work together to support the school district.



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Focus Group Themes & Trends

STUDENTS







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Strengths

- **Teaching Staff:** Students appreciate their teachers' patience, humor and engagement levels.
- **CTE Program:** The wide variety of Career and Technical Education opportunities is highly valued and well-regarded among students.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Students are grateful for extracurricular activities, College Credit Plus, free summer school and free SAT exams.
- **Resources:** The provision of Chromebooks and the policy of excusing students from finals if they pass testing are positively received.

Challenges and Weaknesses

- **Sports and Extracurriculars:** Students express a desire for more diverse sports offerings and improvements in middle school sports funding.
- **Academic Opportunities:** There's a call for more elective options, college courses and practical classes like financial literacy and personal development.
- **Transition Programs:** Suggestions were made for programs, such as tours or shadowing programs, that would help 8th graders transition more smoothly to high school.
- **Facilities:** Students recognized that the facilities were in bad shape, and many of them associated the community's unwillingness to address the rundown schools with a lack of care for them as students.

Focus Group Themes & Trends

VALLEY FORGE HIGH SCHOOL

Strengths

- **Welcoming Environment:** The school is seen as a welcoming place where students coexist harmoniously.
- **Diverse Educational Paths:** Students appreciated the availability of different educational paths, including college prep and various CTE programs.
- **Music Programs:** The quality of music programs received positive mentions.
- **Dedicated Teachers:** The effort and care of teachers are acknowledged and valued by students.

Challenges and Weaknesses

- **School Nurse Interaction:** Students feel the nurses are not welcoming and doubt the students' needs, which can be attributed to understaffing and attitudes.
- **Integration of Students from Closed School:** Integrating students from a recently closed high school has been challenging, as some feel like second-class citizens.
- **Student Stress:** There's a perception that teachers underestimate the stress levels students face.
- **Learning Approach:** Concerns were raised about excessive self-learning and a lack of tutoring opportunities during the school day.
- **Dress Code Punishment:** Students feel the punishment for dress code violations is disproportionate to the offense.
- **In-School Suspension:** Students questioned the effectiveness of In-School Suspension (ISI) as a punishment.

Focus Group Themes & Trends

TOWN HALL



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Focus Group Themes & Trends
TOWN HALL

Strengths

- **CTE Program:** The CTE program within the district is highly regarded, with many students participating.
- **ACES Program:** The ACES program is well-liked among participants, with suggestions to expand it to each building within the district.
- **Teacher Engagement:** Teachers are praised for going above and beyond their duties, showing commitment to the community and being responsive to student needs.
- **Community Spirit:** A strong sense of community and history within Parma City Schools is valued, contributing to a cohesive educational environment.

Challenges and Weaknesses

- **Special Education:** Communication is a significant challenge for Special Education parents, who need help finding information and often learn about their child's teachers only shortly before the school year starts.
- **Pre-K:** Communication regarding Pre-K is described as "non-existent," with parents desiring more options and better engagement.
- **Standardization:** There's a desire for standardized communication across the district, possibly through a general app, to ensure the clarity of multiple sources.
- **Printed Newsletter:** A quarterly newsletter is suggested to reach community members who are not connected online and to share positive things in the district with the community.

Trust

- **Distrust Regarding Financial Management:** Respondents noted a notable lack of financial trust, with suggestions for establishing a Citizen’s Financial Committee and publishing routine financial reports to improve transparency. Past board behavior is cited as a factor that undermined trust.

Inclusivity

- **Supporting Neurodiverse Students:** There are concerns about ensuring that neurodiverse students are integrated well with their peers, highlighting the need for a more inclusive environment.