To: Board of Education, Salt Lake City Schools
Dr. Elizabeth Grant, Superintendent
From: Leeson M. Taylor II, Ed. D., Executive Director, SL&S
Re: Overview of Findings and Recommendations – SLCSE Community Engagement and Improvement Process
Date: June 17, 2025

Summary:

This memo provides an overview of the key themes, concerns, and proposed action steps gathered through staff engagement at the Salt Lake Center for Science Education (SLCSE). The purpose of this work is to align school practice with the District's vision for equity, rigor, and innovation while responding constructively to stakeholder input.

I.   Summary of Common Themes

- ***Clarity and Consistency Needed***
  - Staff express a strong need for clearer roles, expectations, and a unified vision for the SLCSE model. Confusion remains about policies such as SIC/SCC governance and course programming.

- ***Collective Commitment to Students***
  - There is universal dedication to improving student outcomes, particularly through rigorous and relevant experiential learning.

- ***Model Recognized for Strengths***
  - The core tenets of the SLCSE model—experiential learning, STEM focus, and teacher leadership—are widely valued, even among critics.

- ***Communication Challenges***
  - Persistent communication breakdowns are reported across all levels, leaving staff feeling excluded from decision-making.

- ***Equity and Access Concerns***
  - Concerns include tracking, Special Education clustering, and equitable access to the high school through the lottery process.

- ***Philosophical Divides***
  - Staff are split between progressive, student-centered approaches and those favoring more traditional academic structures.

III. Identified Barriers

- Governance Confusion: Overlapping and unclear authority across SIC/SCC and leadership.
- Leadership Turnover: Repeated transitions have interrupted progress and eroded trust.
- Cross-Campus Disconnect: Limited collaboration has led to inconsistent culture and practice.
- Program Incoherence: Field experiences and curriculum alignment vary widely.
- Lack of Stakeholder Voice: Key decisions have often excluded teacher and staff input.
- Divergent Educational Philosophies: Disagreement over what best serves student success.

IV. Key Challenges

- Rebuilding trust among and between staff, leadership, and campuses.
- Clarifying governance roles and decision-making structures.
- Reaffirming or redefining the SLCSE model collaboratively.
- Closing achievement gaps while preserving innovation.
- Ensuring equitable access and inclusive academic practices.
- Strengthening and sustaining teacher leadership and input.

V. Recommendations

- *Collaborative Model Review*
  - Convene a diverse task force to assess and refine the SLCSE model.

- *Clarify Governance Structures*
  - Define SIC/SCC functions and develop transparent decision-making protocols.

- *Improve Communication*
  - Establish routine, transparent updates and feedback loops.

- *Strengthen Collaboration*
  - Reinstate joint PD, shared planning, and cross-campus teaming.

- *Enhance Equity and Access*
  - Review the lottery system, tracking practices, and SPED placement for fairness.

- ***Stabilize Leadership***
    - Identify leadership competencies aligned with SLCSE needs and support leadership continuity.

- ***Improve Experiential Learning***
    - Align field trips with curriculum and broaden the definition of experiential learning to include arts, literacy, and inclusion.

- ***Revitalize the School Improvement Plan***
    - Co-develop and monitor the SIP with clear goals and measurable outcomes.

Requested Board Action

While there is no requested action at this time, the process has reaffirmed the community's dedication to the SLCSE vision while identifying clear areas for improvement. With a coordinated response rooted in equity, clarity, and collaboration, the District can ensure that SLCSE remains a flagship of innovative, inclusive education or if it is determined by a grassroots effort, come forward with future modifications, changes or even dissolution of the existing model at SLCSE Bryant.

Attached: PowerPoint Overview

SLCSE Model Overview

School Leadership & Support

Salt Lake City School District

Purpose & Focus

- Please note that the information here is focused on the SLCSE Model and the partnership between the Rose Park and Bryant sites.

- It is not:

  - An evaluation of personnel

  - A comparison with any other model

  - A research study

Over the past 3 months…

- We held 18 listening sessions (over 23 hours)

- With roughly 61 people

- In 5 different formats
  - One-on-One
  - Small groups
  - SIC
  - SCC
  - PTA
  - Surveys

What is the SLCSE Model?

- Vision/Tenets:

SCIENCE & MATH
- All students take Math and Science every year
- Science is taught as an extended period
- Course sequence: Integrated Science 7 - Integrated Science 8 - Physics - Chemistry - Biology - Science Elective

UNTRACKED CLASSES
- Students are scheduled in grade level bands
- All students have access to rigorous curriculum
- Inclusive classrooms within a small school community
- Recognized by AP for delivering results and broadening access for students

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
- Real-world experiences beyond the walls of the classroom
- Outdoor Learning: camping, hiking, biking, and kayaking
- Participation in the Utah legislative session
- Lab visits at the University of Utah
- Engage with the community through service learning

TEACHER TEAMING
- Cross-curricular integration
- Project Based Learning
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Student Support

TEACHER LEADERS
- Community Partnerships and Student Internships
- Experiential Learning
- Instructional Mentorship

VERTICAL ALIGNMENT
- Building student academic and soft skills by aligning curriculum and instruction from 7th through 12th grade

Commonalities Across Groups

Desire for clarity and consistency in roles, expectations, and model tenets.

Shared commitment to students' success and equity.

Recognition of the value in the SLCSE model.

Concerns over communication breakdowns across the system.

Ongoing issues with equity and access.

Tensions between progressive and traditional philosophical approaches.

Barriers Identified

Governance confusion around SIC/SCC and decision-making authority.

Disruption due to leadership turnover.

Limited collaboration across campuses.

Incoherent program structures and inconsistent implementation.

Lack of stakeholder involvement in key decisions.

Philosophical divide over the model's purpose and execution.

Key Challenges to Address

Rebuilding	Rebuilding trust among staff, campuses, and leadership.
Clarifying	Clarifying governance and policy structures.
Reaffirming or redefining	Reaffirming or redefining the SLCSE model.
Addressing	Addressing achievement gaps with a focus on equity.
Ensuring	Ensuring equitable access to high school.
Sustaining and supporting	Sustaining and supporting teacher leadership.

Recommendations: Model Review & Governance

- Initiate a collaborative model review with representative stakeholders.

- Identify shared goals and non-negotiables.

- Clarify SCT/SCC roles and joint leadership responsibilities.

- Publish clear decision-making protocols.

Recommendations: Communication & Collaboration

- Implement regular updates and transparent rationale for changes.

- Create feedback loops for all major initiatives.

- Reinstate joint PD and cross-campus planning.

- Foster relationships between middle and high school staff.

Recommendations: Equity, Leadership, & SIP

- Review and revise lottery and tracking systems.

- Audit SPED placements and course offerings.

- Define leadership competencies for SLCSE context.

- Reengage staff in SIP development and monitoring.

Recommendations: Experiential Learning

- Align field trips with curriculum and testing calendars.

- Expand experiential learning to include literacy, arts, and inclusive practices.

Recommendations: Partnerships

- There has to be a joint commitment to shared goals by all parties.

  - Clearly outline goals

  - Identify KPIs

  - Regularly communicate

  - Review results

Questions