Empower Your Voice: Inform. Listen. Connect.
Full Summary Report
Columbus City Schools | September-November 2026





Executive Summary

The **Empower Your Voice: Inform. Listen. Connect.** initiative represents Columbus City Schools' commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for students, families, staff, and community members to engage directly with district leadership, share feedback, and help inform future decisions. Through a combination of the Bi-Annual Family Ambassador Convening, Community Listening Sessions, Student Lunch Conversations, and an online survey, the district is strengthening transparency, building trust, and elevating stakeholder voice throughout the decision-making process.

Engagement Opportunities

The engagement process included multiple opportunities for participation:

Family Ambassador Bi-Annual Convening

- Fort Hayes Arts & Academic High School | September 21, 2026

Student Voice Lunch Conversations

- Buckeye Middle School | October 26, 2026
- South High School | November 9, 2026
- Mifflin High School | November 11, 2026

Community Listening Sessions

- Fort Hayes Arts & Academic High School | October 12, 2026
- Mifflin Middle School | October 28, 2026
- Marion-Franklin High School | November 2, 2026

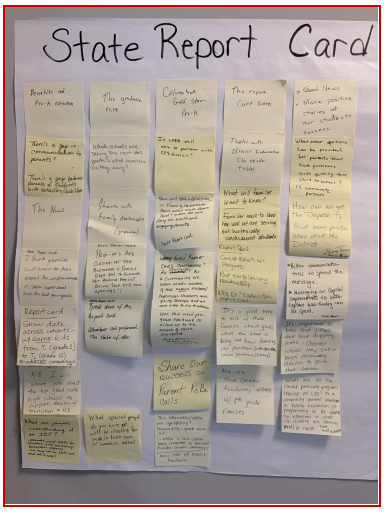
Virtual Office Hours

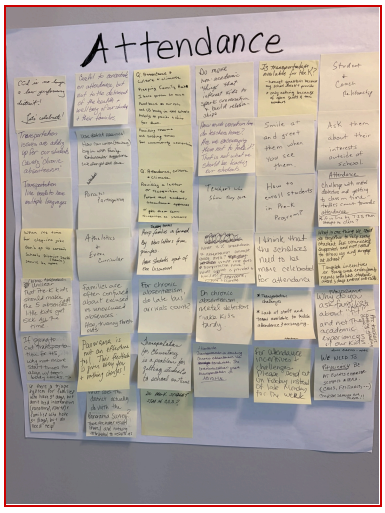
- 1:00pm Afternoon Session | November 18, 2026
- 5:30pm Evening Session | November 18, 2026

Staff Listening Sessions

- CCS Senior Leadership visited each impacted building to listen to staff concerns.

In addition to in-person sessions, families, students, staff, and community members are encouraged to share their perspectives through the district's **online Empower Your Voice survey**, ensuring feedback opportunities remain accessible to those unable to attend in person. The survey allows stakeholders to continue contributing ideas, concerns, and recommendations that will help inform future district planning and Board of Education discussions.







Key Themes Across All Engagement Activities

Several themes emerged consistently across conversations with families, community members, and students.

1. Communication, Transparency, and Trust

Participants overwhelmingly expressed appreciation for hearing directly from district leadership while also emphasizing the need for continued, clear, and proactive communication about district priorities, budget considerations, facilities planning, transportation proposals, academic performance, and future changes. Families want:

- More accessible and understandable information.
- Greater context behind district decisions.
- Consistent updates on progress and outcomes.
- Clear explanations of how stakeholder feedback influences action.

A recurring question across sessions was, "What happens with the information we share?" Stakeholders emphasized the importance of seeing a clear connection between feedback, decision-making, and implementation.

2. Transportation Remains a Major Concern

Transportation emerged as one of the most significant topics across both family and community conversations.

Participants raised concerns regarding:

- Chronic absenteeism and tardiness related to transportation.
- Reliability and safety of COTA and other transportation options.
- Student safety at bus stops and on public transportation.
- Equitable transportation access across neighborhoods.

- Transportation implications connected to school boundary and facility changes.
- Clear communication regarding transportation eligibility and policies.

Students and families alike recognized transportation as a key factor influencing attendance, access to opportunities, and overall student success.

3. School Realignment, Facilities, and Modernization

Community members and students generally support investments in modern learning environments but expressed concerns about how facility decisions may affect students and neighborhoods.

Key considerations included:

- Preserving neighborhood school identity and traditions.
- Maintaining community connections.
- Ensuring equitable investment across schools.
- Providing safe, well-maintained, and welcoming facilities.
- Preserving specialized programs and services.
- Communicating timelines, costs, and project impacts clearly.

Stakeholders consistently requested ongoing engagement before final decisions are made regarding school closures, consolidations, or boundary changes.

4. Student Belonging, School Culture, and Well-Being

Students and families repeatedly highlighted the importance of supportive school environments where students feel welcomed, respected, connected, and valued.

Participants emphasized:

- Strong relationships with trusted adults.
- Welcoming school climates.
- Reduced bullying and increased kindness.
- Student voice in decision-making.

- Opportunities for peer mentoring and leadership.
- Access to counseling and support services.

Students consistently noted that belonging and positive relationships directly influence engagement, attendance, and overall school experience.

5. Family Engagement and Community Partnership

Families expressed a desire to play a larger role in supporting district priorities and connecting schools with the broader community.

Participants encouraged:

- Expanding Family Ambassador involvement.
- Strengthening partnerships with community organizations.
- Increasing opportunities for feedback and dialogue.
- Improving outreach to multilingual and diverse communities.
- Creating stronger school-community connections through events and partnerships.

Stakeholders view family engagement as a critical component of student success and district improvement efforts.

6. Supporting the Whole Child

Families and students emphasized that academic success cannot be separated from broader student needs.

Key areas of interest included:

- Early childhood education and Pre-K access.
- Student mental health and wellness.
- Special education and support services.
- Career and technical education pathways.
- Attendance support systems.
- Recognition and celebration of student success.

Participants called for a comprehensive approach that addresses both academic achievement and student well-being.

Student Voice Highlights

Students shared thoughtful perspectives about their experiences and hopes for the future of Columbus City Schools.

At Buckeye Middle School, students emphasized:

- Safe and respectful learning environments.
- Stronger opportunities for belonging and connection.
- Trusted relationships with adults.
- Positive experiences with the House System.
- More student leadership opportunities.

At South High School, students discussed:

- Concerns regarding budget reductions and district changes.
- School modernization and preserving school traditions.
- Transportation proposals involving COTA.
- Belonging and school culture.
- The value of the House System and Academies.
- Protecting programs, clubs, traditions, and relationships that make their schools unique.

At Mifflin High School, students discussed:

- Strong sense of belonging and pride
- Positive school climate
- Strong opposition to closing Mifflin High School
- Fear losing important relationships, community connections, traditions, identity
- Transportation safety concerns
- Need for greater transparency and direct communication from district leadership

- Desire to preserve key aspects of the Mifflin experience

The Empower Your Voice initiative has demonstrated a strong community interest in participating in the future of Columbus City Schools. Across all engagement opportunities, stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of transparency, communication, transportation, belonging, safe and modern facilities, and meaningful family engagement.

While specific concerns varied by community and audience, a clear message emerged: stakeholders want opportunities to be informed, heard, and involved before major decisions are made. The feedback collected through listening sessions, student conversations, the Family Ambassador Convening, and the online survey will help district leaders and the Board of Education better understand community priorities and inform future planning.

Collectively, these engagement efforts reaffirm the district's belief that authentic partnership with students, families, staff, and community members is essential to building trust, strengthening schools, and ensuring that every voice has the opportunity to shape the future of Columbus City Schools.






Key Themes from Staff Conversations at Impacted Schools

Staff questions and feedback consistently centered around the need for additional information and clarity in several key areas:

- **Student Enrollment & Attendance Patterns**: Questions about how many students live within the school's attendance area compared with those who attend from outside the neighborhood.

- **Facility & Resource Transitions**: Interest in understanding what would happen to existing school assets, equipment, and resources if a relocation or consolidation occurs.

- **Specialized Programming**: Requests for clarification regarding the future of specialized programs and services, including early childhood and special education supports.

- **Program Continuity**: Questions about whether receiving schools have the capacity and space needed to maintain unique academic, arts, or specialty programming.

- **Staffing & Employee Impact**: Concerns regarding staffing decisions, timelines for employee notifications, and how transitions would be managed in partnership with labor organizations. Staff expressed a strong desire for timely and transparent communication about potential impacts to employees.

- **Transition Planning & Support**: Interest in understanding the district's approach to managing student, staff, and program transitions should realignment proposals be approved. Staff emphasized the importance of a well-defined implementation plan.

- **Communication & Public Information**: Feedback that community-facing materials should be clearer and easier to

understand, particularly regarding reassignment plans, transition processes, and the rationale for proposed changes.

End of Executive Summary. See below for full Summary Reports.

Family Ambassador Bi-Annual Convening
Fort Hayes Arts & Academics | September 21, 2026

Slide Deck

The *Empower Your Voice: Inform. Listen. Connect.* Bi-Annual Convening brought together Columbus City Schools Family Ambassadors and invited school community representatives for an evening of information sharing, engagement, and dialogue with district leadership. Hosted on September 21, 2026, the event provided participants with the opportunity to hear directly from Superintendent & CEO **Dr. Angela Chapman** and members of the district leadership team regarding several key district priorities and initiatives.

Presentations focused on the Ohio State Report Card, Capital Improvement Projects, Attendance initiatives, Culture & Climate efforts including the Panorama Survey, and the importance of early learning through PreK enrollment. The convening was designed to ensure that family representatives received timely district updates while creating space for meaningful discussion and feedback on issues that directly impact students, families, schools, and communities.

The convening served three primary objectives:

- **Inform** participants about current district priorities, progress, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Listen** to family and community perspectives related to district initiatives and student success.
- **Connect** families with district leadership to strengthen trust, transparency, and two-way communication.

Following the presentations, attendees engaged in facilitated feedback activities and shared their thoughts through interactive poster discussions. Several recurring themes emerged from participant comments:

Communication and Transparency

Participants expressed appreciation for receiving direct updates from district leadership and emphasized the importance of continuing regular communication regarding district initiatives, school performance, and student support services.

Student Attendance and Family Engagement

Families recognized attendance as a critical factor in student success and supported efforts to increase attendance awareness. Participants encouraged continued family outreach, access to resources, and school-community partnerships that help remove barriers to regular attendance.

School Climate and Student Well-Being

Attendees highlighted the importance of creating welcoming, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. Feedback underscored the value of gathering student, family, and staff perspectives through tools such as the Panorama Survey to inform decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.

Facilities and Capital Investments

Families expressed interest in understanding how capital improvements will impact school environments and student experiences. Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn more about ongoing and future facility enhancements throughout the district.

Early Learning Opportunities

The discussion around PreK enrollment generated strong interest, with attendees acknowledging the importance of early childhood education and encouraging continued efforts to increase awareness and access for families.

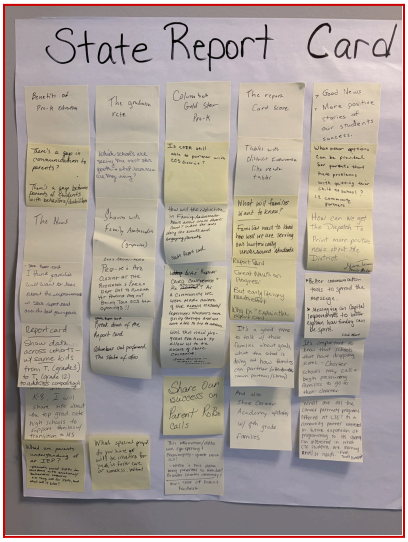
The Bi-Annual Convening successfully advanced Columbus City Schools' commitment to authentic family engagement by creating a platform for

listening, learning, and collaboration. Family Ambassadors and community representatives provided valuable input that will help inform future engagement strategies and district decision-making. The event reinforced the district's belief that meaningful family partnerships are essential to supporting student achievement, strengthening school communities, and ensuring that every family has the opportunity to be heard.

Next Steps: Feedback collected during the convening will be reviewed and shared with relevant district departments to support continuous improvement efforts and strengthen family-centered practices across Columbus City Schools. Detailed summary of key points can be found below.



State Report Card Feedback



The feedback centers on **making the State Report Card easier for families and communities to understand and use**, while highlighting both positive outcomes and areas where additional information or action is needed.

Key themes

- **Share more positive news and successes.**
    - Highlight student success stories and positive accomplishments from schools and the district.
    - Communicate “good news” more consistently through channels such as the district website, newsletters, social media, and The Dispatch.
    - Share updates about programs such as Career Academy and opportunities for students.

- **Improve communication with parents and families.**
    - Several comments identify a communication gap between schools and parents.

- Use clearer, more accessible messaging to explain what the report card means and how families can respond.

- Consider using parent calls, Facebook/social media, and other direct communication methods.
- Explore ways to involve Family Ambassadors and parent/community partners in sharing information.

- **Make the data more understandable and useful.**

  - Show data across multiple years rather than relying on a single year's results.
  - Provide comparisons with other schools/districts, including comparisons with Columbus and the state of Ohio.
  - Explain trends in areas such as graduation rates and student achievement.
  - Clarify what specific report-card measures mean and what actions are being taken in response.

- **Focus on early childhood and Pre-K.**

  - Provide more information about the **benefits of Pre-K education**.
  - Explain access to Pre-K and opportunities for families.
  - Highlight Columbus Gold Star Pre-K and other early-learning efforts.
  - Address questions about whether additional Pre-K partnerships or programs could serve families who need them.

- **Address student behavior and family support.**

  - Feedback raises concerns about student behavior and the need for stronger communication with families around behavioral expectations and support.

- Consider how schools can partner with parents when students need additional support.

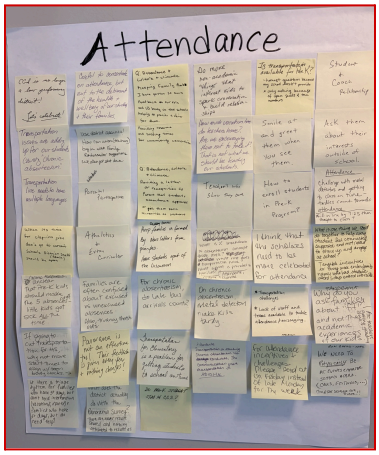
- **Strengthen family and community partnerships.**
  - Continue developing Family Ambassador/growing parent engagement efforts.
  - Explore partnerships with community organizations and businesses.
  - Consider how community partners can help communicate and support district initiatives.

- **Provide more context around areas needing improvement.**
  - Rather than simply presenting report-card scores, explain **why scores changed, what the district is doing about them, and how progress will be measured**.
  - Include information about special education, student transitions, and other areas raised by families.

Theme	What We Heard
Communicate the Good	Share more positive news, student successes, school accomplishments, and program opportunities through the district website, newsletters, social media, and local media.
Clear & Accessible Family Communication	Families identified a communication gap and want clearer, easier-to-understand information about report cards, expectations, resources, and opportunities.
Make Data Meaningful	Families want data presented across multiple years, with comparisons and explanations of trends, what the measures mean, and what actions are being taken.
Strengthen Family Voice & Partnerships	Expand the role of Family Ambassadors, parents, and community partners in communicating information, gathering feedback, and supporting district initiatives.
Support the Whole Student & Family	Address student behavior, family support, special education, transitions, early childhood, and other factors that affect student success.
Increase Awareness of Opportunities & Resources	Provide more information about Pre-K, Career Academy, early learning, student programs, and resources available to families.

Strengthen Community Connections	Build partnerships with community organizations and businesses to expand communication, resources, and support for students and families.
Connect Feedback to Action	Families want to understand why results change, what the district is doing in response, how progress will be measured, and how they will be kept informed.

Attendance Feedback- Summary of Key Points



Key Themes

Transportation is a significant barrier

Transportation emerged repeatedly as a contributor to chronic absenteeism and tardiness.

Key concerns included:

- Transportation issues are contributing to **chronic absenteeism**.
- Elementary transportation is affecting students getting to school on time.
- Transportation information and communication may need to be available in **multiple languages**.
- Questions were raised about whether **late buses count toward attendance concerns**.
- Metal detectors and other arrival procedures may also contribute to students being marked tardy.
- There was interest in examining whether changes to **high school start times** could help address transportation challenges.

- Participants want clearer communication and coordination around transportation.

Implication: Attendance solutions should include a coordinated review of transportation, arrival procedures, communication, and tardiness—not just family outreach.

Families need clearer information and support

Several comments identified confusion around attendance policies and expectations.

Feedback included:

- Families may be confused about **excused versus unexcused absences**.
- Families may not understand truancy thresholds or when absences trigger intervention.
- Participants questioned whether there should be a **triage system** to distinguish families who need support from those whose absences are related to circumstances such as vacations or activities.
- There were questions about how families receive attendance information and support.
- Participants suggested using **district resources and family ambassadors** to improve communication.

Implication: Families may benefit from simple, accessible attendance guidance, consistent messaging, and early support before absences become chronic.

Relationships and belonging matter

A strong theme was that students are more likely to engage when they feel **known, connected, and cared for**.

Suggestions included:

- Teachers should demonstrate that they **care about students**.
- Staff can **smile, greet students, and create welcoming environments**.
- Ask students about their **interests outside of school**.
- Strengthen **student–coach relationships**.
- Do more non-academic activities that create opportunities for students to **talk, connect, and build relationships**.
- Ask students what would help them feel **connected, supported, and motivated to show up every day**.

Implication: Attendance strategies should include a deliberate focus on student belonging and positive adult-student relationships.

Recognition and incentives could encourage attendance

Participants suggested that students and families should receive more positive recognition for attendance.

Ideas included:

- Celebrating students for attendance.
- Recognition or letters from principals.
- Including students in conversations about attendance.
- Creating attendance incentives or challenges.
- Considering incentives at strategic times, such as **Friday rather than late Monday**.
- Providing tangible incentives while also celebrating students' efforts and progress.

There was also a broader comment that **students need to be celebrated more for attendance**, not simply contacted when they are absent.

Implication: Shift some attendance messaging from a primarily corrective approach to one that also recognizes progress, consistency, and improvement.

Attendance responses need to be differentiated

The feedback questioned whether the same attendance response should be used for every student or family.

Questions included:

- For chronic absenteeism, do **late arrivals count differently from absences**?
- How should schools respond when students have accumulated several absences but do not need intensive intervention?
- How can schools distinguish between students experiencing genuine barriers and situations that require a different response?
- Are there enough staff or teams available to manage attendance outreach and messaging effectively?

Implication: Schools may need a **tiered attendance response system** that matches the level and type of support to the student's circumstances.

Data and accountability need to lead to action

The feedback also raised questions about how attendance data is being used.
One recurring concern was essentially:

What happens with the information we collect?

Examples included:

- What does the district do with **Panorama survey results**?

- Are results shared back with schools and families?
- How are attendance patterns being used to identify barriers?
- Do schools have adequate staffing and teams to respond to attendance concerns?
- Are attendance efforts coordinated across schools and departments?

Theme	What We Heard
Transportation	A major contributor to chronic absenteeism and tardiness
Family Communication	Families need clearer, multilingual, accessible information
Student Belonging	Relationships and feeling known may influence attendance
Positive Recognition	Celebrate attendance and improvement, not only address absences
Tiered Support	Different attendance circumstances require different responses
School Climate	Welcoming interactions, caring adults, and connection matter
Data Use	Staff want to know how attendance and survey data translates into action
Community Engagement	Schools need a stronger presence at community events and opportunities to connect with families
Early Childhood	Questions remain about Pre-K enrollment and attendance expectations

Capital Improvements — Summary of Key Points



- **Safe, well-maintained schools**
  - Address aging facilities, leaks, mold, peeling paint, heating/cooling, and other building maintenance needs.
- **Welcoming environments**
  - Improve the appearance of schools through fresh paint, updated colors, and more inviting spaces.
- **Accessibility and inclusion**
  - Ensure facilities meet the needs of students with disabilities and provide sensory-friendly, special education, and alternative learning spaces.
- **Student opportunities**
  - Invest in athletic facilities, auditoriums, gyms, playgrounds, outdoor learning, and spaces that support extracurricular activities.
- **Equitable investment**
  - Consider whether capital improvements are being distributed equitably across schools and communities.
- **Transportation and access**

    - Consider transportation needs and how school locations, closures, and capital decisions affect student access.
- **Transparency**
    - Clearly explain capital priorities, project costs, timelines, school closures/consolidations, and decisions about buildings.
- **Family and community voice**
    - Engage families, staff, and community members in capital planning and renovation discussions.
- **Future-ready facilities**
    - Consider sustainability, technology, electric vehicles, and changing student and program needs in long-term planning.
- **Ongoing communication**
    - Provide regular updates so families and communities know what is happening, why decisions are being made, and how projects are progressing.

Theme	What We Heard
Safe, Healthy & Well-Maintained Buildings	Families want schools to be safe, clean, and well maintained. Concerns included leaks, mold, peeling paint, aging facilities, and the need for improvements to heating, cooling, and other basic building conditions.
Welcoming & Attractive Learning Environments	**Appearance matters.** Participants want fresh paint, updated color schemes, inviting spaces, and facilities that make students and families feel welcome.

Accessibility & Inclusive Design	Capital investments should ensure schools are accessible to students with disabilities and meet a range of learner needs. Feedback included accessible spaces, sensory-friendly environments, special education spaces, and alternative learning areas.
Learning Environments for Diverse Student Needs	Participants want investments that support different ways of learning, including outdoor classrooms, sensory-friendly spaces, alternative learning environments, and spaces designed for students with varying needs.
Athletics, Arts & Student Activities	There is interest in investing in athletic facilities, auditoriums, gyms, playgrounds, and other spaces that support extracurricular activities and the whole student experience.
Equitable Opportunities Across Schools	Participants raised questions about whether all schools are receiving appropriate capital investments and whether students across the district have comparable access to quality facilities and opportunities.
Transportation & Access	Transportation remains an important consideration in capital planning. Participants want to understand transportation impacts and how capital decisions may affect students' ability to access schools and programs.

Transparency in Capital Planning	Families want clearer information about which projects are being prioritized, how decisions are made, project timelines, school closures or consolidations, and what happens to buildings that are closed or sold.
Family & Community Engagement	Participants want families and communities involved in discussions about renovations, school changes, and capital priorities. There was interest in hearing from parents, staff, and community members earlier in the decision-making process.
Future-Ready & Sustainable Investments	Feedback recognized investments such as solar energy and the move toward electric vehicles, while also raising questions about how future capital investments will prepare schools for changing needs.
School Size, Capacity & Program Opportunities	Participants raised questions about larger high schools, opportunities for students, building consolidation, and whether existing facilities can adequately support current and future enrollment and programming.
Communication About Projects & Progress	Families want regular updates about capital projects, including what is happening, why decisions were made, project timelines, and when improvements will be completed.

Empower Your Voice: Community Listening Tours & Student Lunch Visits- FULL REPORT

Overview

As part of Superintendent Dr. Angela Chapman's *Empower Your Voice* initiative, Columbus City Schools is expanding opportunities for authentic engagement with students, families, staff, and community members. The initiative is designed to increase transparency, strengthen two-way communication, and ensure stakeholder voices help inform future district decisions.

The engagement strategy includes both **Student Lunch Conversations** and **Community Listening Sessions**, providing direct opportunities for district leadership to hear concerns, gather feedback, and better understand stakeholder priorities related to district operations, school experiences, facilities, transportation, belonging, and future planning.

Student Lunch Visits

Student Lunch Visits provide an informal setting for students to engage directly with the Superintendent and district leaders. These conversations are intended to elevate student voice, gather feedback on district proposals, and better understand student experiences, priorities, and concerns. Topics include school culture, belonging, transportation, facilities, academics, and what students value most about their schools.

Student Lunch Visit Dates

School	Date	Time
Buckeye Middle School	October 26, 2026	11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
South High School	November 9, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Mifflin High School	November 11, 2026	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Student Discussion Themes

Student conversations will focus on:

- Student perspectives on the future of Columbus City Schools
- School consolidation and facility modernization
- Transportation proposals, including student use of COTA
- School culture, belonging, and the House System
- Academic opportunities and Career Technical Education pathways
- Trusted adults and support systems within schools
- Programs and traditions students value and want preserved for future generations

Community Listening Sessions

The Community Listening Sessions are structured engagement sessions designed to provide families, students, staff, and community members with an opportunity to:

- Receive information regarding district priorities and proposals.
- Ask questions directly of district leadership.
- Share concerns, ideas, and recommendations.
- Participate in small-group discussions focused on key district initiatives.
- Contribute feedback that will be compiled and shared with the Board of Education to help inform future decision-making.

Community Listening Sessions

School	Date	Time
Mifflin Middle School	October 28, 2026	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Marion-Franklin High School	November 2, 2026	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

To ensure broad participation and equitable access, interpretation services were available for multiple language groups. These supports align with the district's commitment to engaging diverse families and removing barriers to participation.

Mifflin Middle School

- Spanish
- Nepali
- Somali
- Arabic
- Haitian Creole

Marion-Franklin High School

- Spanish
- Haitian Creole

Key Objectives

The Empower Your Voice initiative aims to:

- **Increase Transparency**
  - Share information regarding district priorities, budget considerations, facilities planning, and transportation proposals.
- **Strengthen Community Trust**
  - Demonstrate a commitment to listening and engaging before decisions are finalized.
- **Elevate Student and Family Voice**
  - Provide structured opportunities for meaningful stakeholder feedback.
- **Inform Board Decision-Making**
  - Collect and synthesize community input for presentation to the Board of Education and district leadership.

Expected Outcomes

Through the combination of student lunches and community listening tours, Columbus City Schools expects to:

- Gather qualitative feedback from students, families, staff, and community members.
- Identify emerging themes, concerns, and priorities.
- Increase stakeholder understanding of district challenges and opportunities.
- Strengthen community engagement before significant district decisions are considered.
- Produce a comprehensive summary of feedback to support ongoing planning and Board discussions.

The Empower Your Voice engagement series represents a districtwide commitment to informing, listening, and connecting with the Columbus City Schools community. Through direct dialogue with students and families, district leadership is creating meaningful opportunities for stakeholders to help shape conversations about the future of CCS while ensuring that all voices are informed, involved, and heard.

Community Feedback

Community Listening Session with Dr. Angela Chapman & Leadership Mifflin Middle School | October 28, 2026

Transportation

Participants expressed concerns about the reliability, safety, and accessibility of transportation options:

- Questions about whether district students can use COTA and whether temporary COTA passes are available.
- Concerns that students do not consistently use bus passes because public transportation can be unpredictable.

- Reports that the COTA app sometimes indicates a bus is coming when it never arrives, causing students to be late to programs.
- Safety concerns related to COTA stops.
- Concerns about traffic, crime, and transportation access overall.
- A suggestion that it may be preferable to eliminate transportation altogether rather than only providing transportation for charter school students, with some recommending family transportation support instead.

School Realignment

Feedback regarding school boundaries, building use, and community impact included:

Boundary and Enrollment Concerns

- Questions about whether students can remain with their current feeder pattern or learning community.
- Concerns about attendance boundaries being based on zip codes rather than neighborhood identity.
- Requests for clarification about where students would attend if school assignments change.
- Interest in maintaining opportunities to remain connected with established school communities.

Building Utilization and Capacity

- Comments that some schools, such as Mifflin, have available capacity and should continue serving students.
- Concerns about overcrowding at certain campuses if consolidation occurs.
- Questions about using vacant spaces or available classrooms before closing buildings.

Program Access

- Concerns about preserving specialized programs such as ESL and opportunities for immigrant and refugee students.
- Questions about ensuring access to programs across schools and maintaining educational opportunities.

Community Impact

- Concerns that realignment may negatively impact neighborhoods and communities.
- Comments emphasizing the importance of preserving neighborhood schools.
- Worries about the effect of school closures or consolidations on families.
- Requests for stronger communication and transparency throughout the process.

Suggested Considerations

- Keep neighborhood connections intact whenever possible.
- Ensure transportation plans are reliable and safe if students are reassigned.
- Conduct additional community engagement before final decisions are made.
- Consider available building capacity and community impact when evaluating school consolidations.
- Provide clear guidance to families on attendance zones, transportation, and program availability.

Key Takeaway

The strongest messages from participants centered on:

1. **Reliable and safe transportation for students.**
2. **Preserving neighborhood school connections and community identity.**

3. **Transparency about school assignment, consolidation, and boundary decisions.**
4. **Maintaining access to specialized academic programs and support services.**

These themes suggest that families are concerned not only about where students attend school, but also about the practical and community impacts that transportation and realignment decisions may have on students and families.

Community Listening Session with Dr. Angela Chapman & Leadership Marion-Franklin High School | November 2, 2026







During the MFHS discussion on transportation and school realignment, participants expressed significant concerns about how transportation changes could affect student attendance, access, family choice, and overall equity.

Key Transportation Concerns

- Potential negative impacts on student attendance if transportation options become more limited.
- Questions about whether transportation will be provided if a student's assigned school changes due to boundary adjustments or school closures.
- Requests for clarification regarding transportation eligibility for students who apply to attend schools outside of their attendance area.

School Realignment and Boundary Questions

Participants raised several questions regarding the school realignment process, including:

- Whether all current students would be required to change schools.
- How students currently attending out-of-boundary schools would be affected.
- Concerns about grandfathering current students and siblings.
- Requests for clear timelines and communication regarding transition plans.

Equity and Student Impact Themes

Stakeholders consistently emphasized:

- Maintaining stability for students and families during any transition.
- Ensuring equitable access to transportation across all neighborhoods.
- Understanding how changes may disproportionately affect specific student populations.
- The importance of minimizing disruptions to academic progress, social connections, extracurricular activities, and established school communities.

School realignment decisions. **Communication Needs**

Participants requested:

- Transparent and frequent communication throughout the decision-making process.
- Clear explanations of transportation policies under different realignment scenarios.
- Opportunities for families to ask questions and provide feedback before final decisions are made.
- Specific information about eligibility, routes, and transportation support for impacted students.

Overall Sentiment

The feedback reflects a strong desire for clarity, predictability, and equitable transportation solutions. Participants recognize transportation as a critical factor influencing attendance, school choice, access, and family engagement, and view it as one of the most important considerations in any future decisions.

Student Voice Feedback

Student Conversation with Dr. Angela Chapman
Buckeye Middle School | October 26, 2026



Questions

Students were asked to share their voice on any of the questions below.

1. What does your ideal school look like?
2. What initiatives or adjustments would you propose to enhance the sense of belonging?
3. When you have a problem, who is the first person that you tell?
4. As a student, how could the community support you better?
5. How has the House System positively contributed to your sense of belonging?
6. How can both the students and the staff collaborate to strengthen the sense of belonging in your school?
7. What should the adults around you know about your experience and what your would like to see?
8. What additional topics, discussions, or facts would you like to bring to the conversation about your school experience?

Key Themes

1. Students Want a Safe, Supportive, and Respectful School Environment

Students described their ideal school as a place where everyone is kind, respectful, supportive, and feels wanted. They emphasized the importance of

trusting adults, feeling safe, and having positive relationships with both peers and staff.

2. Strong Need for Belonging and Connection

Several students expressed a desire for stronger social connections. While some students feel a sense of belonging through friendships and supportive teachers, others shared that they tend to keep concerns to themselves and have difficulty opening up to others. Some reported limited opportunities to connect with peers outside of school.

3. Trusted Adults Matter

When facing challenges, students most often identified parents, teachers, or other trusted adults as the people they would turn to. However, some students indicated they do not regularly share concerns with anyone due to fear of judgment or a preference for handling issues independently.

4. Positive Impact of the House System

Students spoke positively about the House System, noting that it has helped them:

- Meet new people
- Build friendships
- Feel connected to the school community
- Stay motivated and strive for success academically

While one student initially felt disappointed about house placement, the experience ultimately became positive after forming connections within their house.

5. Student Engagement Remains a Concern

A recurring theme centered on student engagement. One student noted that some classroom activities cause students to "zone out" and become disengaged. Students expressed concern that low engagement can negatively affect the learning environment for peers who are trying to focus and succeed.

6. Desire for Greater Kindness and Reduced Bullying

Students suggested that school culture could be strengthened through:

- Increased kindness among students
- Less bullying
- More supportive and open-minded staff interactions
- Greater collaboration focused on helping students succeed

7. Community Support and Student Leadership Opportunities

Students expressed interest in:

- More caring and supportive people in the community
- Student leadership opportunities, particularly welcoming and mentoring new students
- Additional supports that help students achieve success and feel valued within the school community.

Student Conversation with Dr. Angela Chapman
South High School | November 9, 2026



Questions

Students were asked to share their voice on any of the questions below.

1. What are you hearing about the future of CCS and its budget? Do you have any concerns about it?
2. What do you think about CCS moving students to more modern buildings and closing older buildings?
3. What do you think about CCS high school students riding COTA instead of yellow buses?
4. How can both the students and staff collaborate to strengthen the sense of belonging in your school?
    a. How has the House System positively contributed to your sense of belonging?
    b. What do you think about the Academies?
5. WHat initiatives or adjustments would you propose to enhance students' sense of belonging?
6. When you have a problem, who is the first person you tell?
7. What partner of school do you love and want to protect for future generations of students?

Budget and District Changes

Students are hearing about significant budget challenges, staffing reductions, school mergers, and potential transportation changes. Several expressed concern about losing programs, staff positions, and resources that directly support students. Others indicated they understood the need for changes or were not particularly worried.

School Consolidation and New Facilities

Students generally recognized benefits to newer, more modern school buildings but expressed concerns about:

- Losing school traditions, history, and identity.
- Separation from familiar environments and comfort zones.
- The impact of merging school communities and cultures.
- Maintaining pride and a sense of belonging during transitions.

High School Transportation (COTA vs. Yellow Buses)

Transportation generated some of the strongest feedback. Concerns included:

- Student safety while riding public transportation.
- Reliability and timeliness of COTA service.
- Students receiving unexcused tardies due to transportation delays.
- Limited access to phones, Wi-Fi, or other resources while commuting.
- Parent comfort and confidence in students using public transit. Some students also noted potential benefits:
- Increased independence and responsibility.
- Learning real-world transportation skills.
- Potential district cost savings.

Sense of Belonging and School Culture

Students highlighted the importance of welcoming environments, supportive relationships, and strong school communities. Suggestions included:

- More accessible counseling support.
- Better organization and student support systems.
- Increased attention to student comfort and well-being.
- Opportunities for peer mentoring and leadership development.

House System and Academies

Feedback regarding the House System was largely positive. Students reported that it:

- Creates leadership opportunities.
- Connects students across grade levels.
- Strengthens relationships through shared activities.
- Supports a greater sense of belonging.

Trusted Adults and Support Systems

When facing problems, students most commonly identified:

- Parents and family members.
- Trusted adults.
- Teachers.
- Close friends.

What Students Want Preserved

Students emphasized preserving:

- School traditions and history.
- Programs unique to their schools.
- Arts programs and student clubs.
- Relationships and connections built within school communities.
- The family atmosphere and culture of their schools.

Student Conversation with Dr. Corey D. Grubbs
Mifflin High School | November 11, 2026



Key Themes

The dominant theme throughout the session was a strong sense of attachment and belonging to Mifflin High School. Students consistently expressed concern, confusion, and frustration regarding the potential closure of the high school and the impact it would have on relationships, identity, safety, and community.

1. Strong Opposition to Closing Mifflin High School

Students repeatedly questioned why Mifflin would be considered for closure when they view it as one of the district's newer, well-maintained, and successful facilities. Many felt the decision was unfair and did not align with the school's condition or performance. Several students suggested other schools should be considered before Mifflin.

2. Fear of Losing Community, Relationships, and Belonging

A recurring concern was the loss of friendships, trusted adults, school traditions, and a strong sense of family. Students described Mifflin as a place where they feel accepted, connected, and supported. Many indicated that changing schools would negatively affect their sense of belonging and identity.

3. Student Safety Concerns Related to COTA Transportation

The most frequently cited concern about transitioning from yellow buses to COTA was safety. Students expressed worries about:

- Riding public transportation with strangers
- Traveling longer distances or making multiple transfers
- Younger students navigating public transit
- Attendance challenges created by transportation barriers
- Accessibility concerns for students with disabilities
- Affordability and lost transit passes

Several students stated they believed the transportation changes would negatively impact attendance.

4. Desire for Student Voice and Transparency

Students want direct communication from district leadership and the Board of Education regarding proposed changes. Several felt students should be informed firsthand rather than hearing information indirectly. Others requested that current students, especially sophomores and juniors who would be directly affected, have input into decisions and transition planning.

5. Requests for Choice if School Assignments Change

If closure occurs, students overwhelmingly want some level of choice regarding where they attend school. Many expressed concerns about being reassigned to schools where they do not feel safe or welcome and advocated for a student choice or selective enrollment option.

6. Positive Perceptions of School Climate

Despite concerns about potential changes, students spoke positively about:

- Teachers and staff
- School administrators and counselors
- School traditions and events
- Athletics and extracurricular activities

- Academies and academic programs
- School culture and relationships

Students consistently identified teachers, counselors, coaches, administrators, and family members as trusted sources of support when problems arise.

7. What Students Want Protected

Students most frequently identified the following as important aspects of Mifflin that should be preserved for future generations:

- School community and culture
- Strong student-teacher relationships
- Athletics and sports programs
- Band and performing arts
- Black History programming and school traditions
- Academic opportunities and academies
- Safe and welcoming learning environments
- Opportunities for student engagement and connection