

Community Engagement Themes: What We Heard

To refresh its Strategic Directions and help inform secondary school planning, the Marysville School District conducted a community engagement process to gather ideas about how it is doing and where it can improve.

The following community engagement themes focus on what participating community and staff members want to strengthen. The good news is that people are generally aware of the importance of good schools in building a strong Marysville community. Many voiced their support for the district and a willingness to help where needed. The energy and ingredients for success appear to be present.

1. Community vision and student achievement are intertwined

- ✓ Vision – People want Marysville and Tulalip to have a strong positive identity with great schools, places for families and children to learn and play, after school programs for youth, ample sports fields, and services to meet all students’ needs.

“Strong schools are key to creating communities where people want to live, and where businesses want to locate.”

Community Leader

2. There is a need to strengthen trust and execution

“If the District had a plan with measurable outcomes, we would all know what progress looks like. Then we could celebrate achievement together.”

Community Leader

- ✓ Transparency and trust – Students and families want to be consulted about proposed changes and informed about decisions.
- ✓ Follow through – Most participants said the District’s vision is right, but that achieving this vision will require more focused and consistent action. The District was also encouraged to focus more on its mission, vision, and overarching plan to increase student achievement and to communicate those action plans and outcomes more broadly.



3. Middle and high school organization – Opinions are mixed and often pull in competing directions.

- ✓ High Schools – Most community members and staff who participated overall are in favor of neighborhood high schools. However, many of the Getchell parents responding to the online survey are in support of small learning communities. At the same time, many parents and students also want access to broader course offerings and extracurricular activities.
- ✓ Middle schools – People noted concerns about school culture, behavior, safety and overcrowding in middle schools.
- ✓ Equity of offerings and student body composition – Many urged equitable programming, coursework, and extracurricular opportunities at all schools. People also voiced a desire for equitable distribution of student groups (socio-demographic, gifted and special education students, etc.) across schools. Several pointed to the need for more support for students who are struggling (social services, tutoring and mentoring, mental health counselors, afterschool programs and summer programs). More advanced programming was also requested for students achieving above grade level.

4. Parents want more engagement and communication

- ✓ Engagement – Parents want to be engaged early and often. They want input on: neighborhood schools; expanding career and technical education; and raising cultural awareness and respect. Parents want more help understanding program options and ways to prepare their children for college and careers. The use of social media and online tools has been welcome.

“Over communicate. Show us studies and budget numbers. Engage us early when changes are being considered.”

Parent

5. Community members want to engage more with schools

- ✓ Programming and career awareness – including the trades – Many want students to be more aware of career options early with more hands-on, real world experience – including the trades. Many expressed interest in providing mentoring or internships, and interest in apprenticeship programs with local employers.

6. Mutual respect and cultural competence

- ✓ Mutual respect and cultural competence should be higher priorities – Most community members responding to the survey thought staff and teachers support the learning of all students. Conversations surfaced a perception that mutual respect and cultural competency is not yet a consistent practice. Some noted this leads to feelings of “us and them,” bullying, absenteeism and poor performance. Examples were given of teachers ignoring or treating students differently; ignoring bullying in the classroom; and, reinforcing negative stereotypes. The District was encouraged to strengthen leadership and representation of people of different cultures among District staff and teach respect for different cultures and life situations, such as homelessness.
- ✓ Relationship with The Tulalip Tribes – The District was encouraged to develop a stronger partnership with The Tulalip Tribes and engage the Tribes in developing ways to support native students who are struggling.

- ✓ Curriculum – Students urged more student-centered curriculum with a focus on multiculturalism. Staff encouraged full curriculum adoption and consistent professional learning and mentoring. The Tribes encouraged the District to expand implementation of the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum.

7. School culture and safety

- ✓ School culture and student behavior – Several parents, community members and tribal leaders spoke to the value of teachers developing deeper relationships with students and finding what motivates their learning and behavior. The District was encouraged to consider a trauma-informed approach to teaching and classroom management. School staff are particularly concerned about school culture and behavior in middle schools.

“Students are kids who have a lot going on in their lives. We need to look for ways to bring the kids together as a community and to address bullying.”

Staff Member

- ✓ High expectations for all students – Some said that expectations for students were uneven across schools, teachers and student groups. In discussing solutions, District leaders were encouraged to intervene early, provide a strong leadership voice, and visit schools more often.
- ✓ Safety – Everyone wants students and staff to be safe at school. Some commented on improvements since the shooting. However, some noted that consistent, well-practiced policies and procedures are needed for emergency protocols, and that more security cameras and lighting are needed to make campuses safer.

8. Building maintenance and improvement

- ✓ Pride and sequencing – People want to be proud of their schools and school buildings. Everyone wants school buildings to be more appealing and well maintained. Most understand that new buildings are connected to passing a bond measure. Some would be willing to champion a bond. Others would prefer to see improvements in appearance of current buildings and student academic performance before a bond measure is introduced.
- ✓ Partnerships – It may be possible to partner with the Parks Department to create more playfields. One person suggested creating a sports complex at Marysville Pilchuck for use by the whole community. Several people voiced a desire for schools to be places where the community gathers for events and celebrations.