

thoughtexchange - results and insights



LEICESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
KNOWLEDGE • SKILLS • CHARACTER



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I Introduction

In the fall of 2017, Leicester Public Schools reached out to their community to start a conversation about the future of their facilities.

Participants were then invited to review and prioritize the thoughts of others by placing stars next to the ideas that were most important to them. This report highlights those priorities and considers areas where the thoughts expressed could inform the district about their community's priorities.

The Thoughtexchange Process

Thoughtexchange provides software solutions that bring people together, build trust and make progress on important topics. People can confidentially and independently share their thoughts, appreciate other points of view and understand how their perspectives are connected to decisions.

A simple process ensures everyone is heard, everyone learns and important ideas emerge. The diagram on the right shows the three steps of the Thoughtexchange process. On the following pages, you can find the details of the questions asked and a summary of the findings.



Share answers to open ended questions



Add stars to thoughts shared by others



Discover what is important to the group

Exchange Overview

Participation

 296  597  14,501

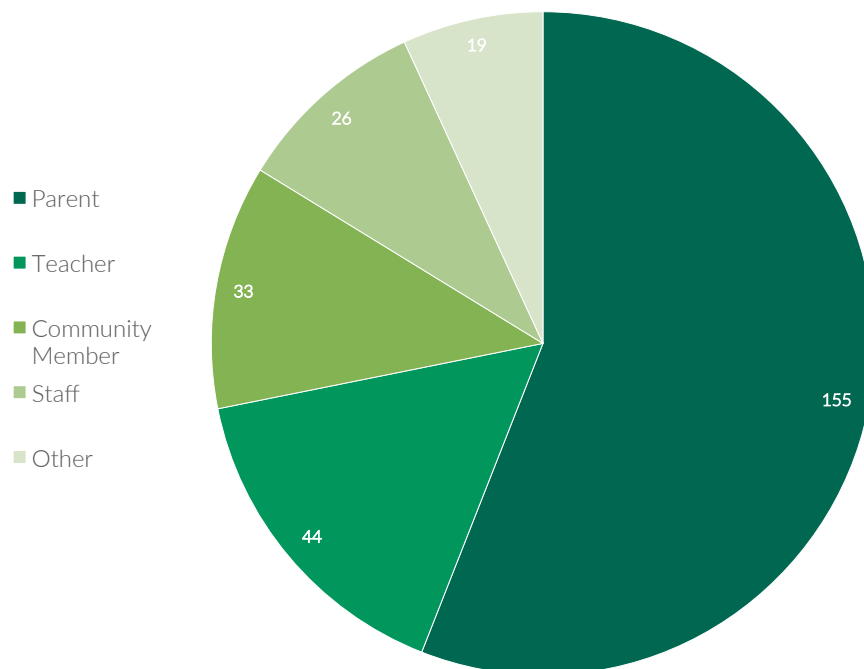
Questions

Q1 What do we need to consider when planning for the future of LPS facilities?

Q2 What are some of your concerns in regards to facilities planning for LPS?

Q3 What questions do you have as we plan for the future of LPS facilities?

Demographics



Insights Overview

An analysis was conducted on the starring patterns of participants, which revealed their priorities for Leicester Public Schools facilities. The thoughts shared by participants have been arranged into themes to highlight participant priorities. Through this analysis, opportunities for engagement and change have been identified.

The analysis is presented in four sections:

- / Why Facilities?
- / Long-Term Vision and Planning
- / Facilities and Resources
- / Key Takeaways



Why Facilities?

In November 2016, members of the Leicester community were invited to discuss the elements of their community and school district that they appreciate and areas they would like to see improved. One of the largest conversations in that Thoughtexchange focused on school facilities and the need to build a new middle school.

In the school facilities conversation, participants suggested that building a new middle school and updating existing facilities should be a priority for the district and wider community. In response to this, Leicester Public Schools held a second exchange in October 2017 that was specifically about facilities. That exchange surfaced participants' priorities regarding school facilities.

The following thoughts are from the 2016 Exchange and reflect the overall conversation and sentiment expressed:

"Support building new school facilities. School facilities with the appropriate infrastructure and instructional spaces help to support positive outcomes for both students and staff, and allow students with complex needs to be supported adequately."

"Renovate existing schools or build new ones. We have aging schools. They should be replaced or renovated. Anything the community can do to support this should be done. Our current and future students deserve facilities that are state of the art."

"Update our buildings - middle school first and foremost. The middle school is in need of structural updates. Our middle school especially is not designed for the New England climate."



Long-Term Vision and Planning

Participants would like the district to ensure that the chosen plan focuses on the long-term feasibility of the facilities. Participants acknowledged that while the plan may be more expensive in the short term, it will be more financially prudent in the long-term.

Future Planning

★ Q1 - 16.5% of stars (largest theme)

★ Q2 - 12.4% of stars (2nd theme)

- Participants would like the district to prioritize the long-term feasibility of any new facilities. Considerations would need to include future population growth, changing technology requirements and evolving curriculum that requires dynamic spaces.

Actually planning for the future. To make sure that money spent now and plans made now not only fit the town's needs now, but 10-50 years in the future.

4.5 ★ 36 👤

Fiscally Responsible

★ Q2 - 13.7% of stars (largest theme)

- Participants would like the district to be financially prudent by making sure the facilities are affordable, but of high enough quality to last a long time.
- They would like the district to offset costs by utilizing cost matching as well as any other additional grants or sources of revenue.
- Participants also discussed the fiscal benefits of consolidating school campuses into a central location. A couple of thoughts suggested doing a cost-benefit analysis or conducting a study to show the Leicester community that the savings would be substantial.

They need to be 21st-century, cost-efficient, and allow for growth to be usable over the years. This will save us long term on costs associated with repairs etc.

3.9 ★ 25 👤

Durability and Maintenance

★ Q1 - 6.7% of stars (4th theme)

★ Q2 - 11.3% of stars (3rd theme)

- Participants highlighted the importance of investing in maintenance of new and existing facilities.
- Some participants suggested that maintenance does not appear to be a priority in the current facilities and this should not be the case for any new schools.
- Many of the thoughts in Q1 stated that several schools are in disrepair and/or need to be updated.

Is the district going to have long-range plans for building maintenance that aren't always subject to budget cuts?

There is much to be said for a safe, clean and pleasant environment. All of these contribute to student learning and community pride.

4.2 ★ 26 👤



Facilities and Resources

Four types of facilities and resources were highlighted as priorities for participants: buildings that incorporate and support technological infrastructure, learning facilities that are dynamic and suitable for a wide array of classes, improved parking and drop-off areas, and improved athletic facilities.

Technology

★ Q1 - 11.6% of stars (2nd theme)

- Participants discussed the importance of incorporating technology into design plans and ensuring that the district's technological infrastructure is able to meet increasing demands of 21st-century teaching and learning needs.

Technology. Build infrastructure that is easy to update as technology changes. Tech never stops. Hard to imagine what the future demands will be. Leave room to grow into new tech.

4.4 ★ 34 👤

Learning Facilities

★ Q1 - 11.0% of stars (3rd theme)

- Participants suggested that the district should incorporate creative learning spaces that will enhance student learning.
- They would also like the district to ensure that classrooms and resources are available for a wide range of classes and programs.
- Suggested facilities include arts/performance spaces, laboratories and STEM facilities.

Giving students access to learning spaces and tools that will increase their learning and potential for success. Creative learning spaces that don't follow traditional norms have been shown to be successful for a variety of students who can then thrive.

4.3 ★ 34 👤

Parking and Traffic

★ Q2 - 8.2% of stars (4th theme)

- Participants would like more parking, as well as additional space for buses and student drop-off and pick-up.
- Participants also expressed concerns about safety.

Ample parking for visitors and staff.

Drop-off area for buses and parents that is separate from the parking area. Most schools don't have ample parking currently and the parking area is often congested due to parent drop-offs and buses. Students getting hurt.

3.8 ★ 26 👤

Athletic Facilities

★ Q2 - 7.3% of stars (5th theme)

- There was some discussion around athletic facilities and potential updates. Participants would like a sports field/complex that is centrally located and accessible to students.

Make sure that we add auditoriums and proper spaced gymnasiums.

These are two largest focal points of any school. They are also used the most within the schools as well as the public.

3.9 ★ 26 👤



Key Takeaways

- / Participants acknowledged the poor condition of the current school facilities.
- / The largest conversations were focused on building facilities that will have longevity and meet the needs of 21st-century learners including diverse programming and technology.
- / In **Communication and engagement**, participants highlighted the importance of engaging the community through providing as much information as possible, and including teachers and staff in the planning process.
- / A few thoughts indicated openness to a central campus, but emphasized participants' need to know more about the logistics of such a project and if the cost savings are worth it.

Learn More

Full results for the Leicester Public Schools can be found here:

Results Website: <http://leicester.k12.ma.thoughtexchange.com>

Dashboard: <https://davserver.thoughtexchange.ca/leicester-3616b00/2/project/>

Username: leicester

Password: scrubby.unreal.vaquero