

Student Focus Group Summaries

October 20, 2022

Student Focus Groups:

- Conducted week of October 19, 2022 via Zoom
- Participants from elementary (1 each), middle (3 each), high (4 each), option (7 each) schools + FLEX (8)
- Participants nominated by principals

Strategic Plan Student Focus Group Demographics October 2022

	Focus Group		District	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
All Students	110	100%	27647	100%
English Language Learner	6	5%	2875	10%
Migrant	1	1%	283	1%
Students with Disabilities	7	6%	3397	12%
Talented and Gifted	33	30%	4657	17%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	1%	121	0%
Asian	22	20%	4756	17%
Black	11	10%	833	3%
Hispanic/Latino	31	28%	7348	27%
Multi-Racial	13	12%	2283	8%
Pacific Islander	1	1%	239	1%
White	31	28%	12067	44%
Female	71	65%	13222	48%
Male	38	35%	14291	52%
Non-Binary	1	1%	134	0%
English is First Language	70	64%	18264	66%

ELEMENTARY

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff speak to me directly. When they engage with me on a personal level — asking me about my life outside of school — I feel like they genuinely care about me.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff accept/celebrate/respect differences among me and my classmates — including racial, ethnic, gender and gender identity differences. It feels like a safe space where I can be me and share my opinions openly.

I feel like I belong when teachers create a welcoming space with encouraging posters.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff have me work in groups with my classmates. It helps me get to know other students and build community.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff can identify when I am struggling. I appreciate when my teacher helps me regulate my emotions by suggesting deep breathing exercises, allowing me to use fidgets or giving me permission to take a break in a zen zone.

MIDDLE

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff make the effort to get to know me on a personal level and develop friendships. I feel safe and included when they inquire about how I am doing outside of school.

I feel like I belong when I hear teachers and staff make affirming/inclusive/welcoming statements about differences in race, culture, gender or gender identity.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff have me work in groups with my classmates. It helps me get to know other students and build community.

I feel like I belong when I have a place to go for social-emotional support, like the wellness center or counseling office. I feel supported when my teacher allows me to take a wellness break.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff listen — whether that is listening to both sides of a conflict or listening/encouraging my participation in class discussion, even if I am not one of the top students.

HIGH

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff greet me and make an effort to personally connect with me. I feel seen when teachers and staff inquire about my life (and stressors) outside of school. I feel valued when they listen to me. I also appreciate when teachers and staff are personable and share information about their lives. When teachers and staff make connections with students, it makes our school community stronger and more collaborative.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff have me work in groups with my classmates. It helps me get to know other students and build community. I appreciate when my teachers provide icebreakers to ease the process.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff encourage and support my participation in activities, clubs and athletics.

I feel like I belong when teachers and staff talk about mental health and provide support and activities for struggling students.

I feel like I belong when teachers, staff and students are respectful and use my preferred pronouns.

ELEMENTARY

I do not feel like I belong when other students engage in name calling, teasing or bullying.

I do not feel like I belong when other students are being disruptive and my teacher has to spend time managing their behaviors. (This kind of disruptive behavior also occurs on the bus.) It feels unfair when my teacher gives a negative consequence (e.g. missed recess or choice time) to the whole class because of the behavior of a few.

I do not feel like I belong when my teacher compares the behavior of my class to another class or grade level. (e.g. “kindergarteners know how to line up better than you.”)

I do not feel like I belong when my culture is ignored and not celebrated in school.

I do not feel like I belong when teachers, staff or other students stereotype based on gender. I do not feel like I belong when I do not have the option of a gender-neutral bathroom and have to use the staff bathroom.

MIDDLE

I do not feel like I belong when other students make inappropriate jokes, tease or bully about attire, race, gender, gender identity, self-harm or suicide — especially when the behavior is not addressed/ignored by teachers and staff.

I do not feel like I belong when other students are being disruptive and loud; I do not feel like I belong when my teacher has to spend time managing their behaviors or ignores their behaviors entirely.

I do not feel like I belong when teachers, staff, substitutes and other students refuse to use my preferred name/pronouns and/or consistently use my dead name, even after being corrected.

HIGH

I do not feel like I belong when I do not have personal connections with teachers, staff or other students. Without these connections, it is difficult to engage in class and participate in more challenging conversations. It feels isolating.

I do not feel like I belong when there are not many opportunities for group work and collaboration.

I do not feel like I belong when teachers do not accommodate/respect 504/IEP/mental health plans or make no exceptions for illness/issues related to anxiety.

I do not feel like I belong when equity and inclusion seems surface-level. For example, some teachers seem uncomfortable being with and teaching transgender students. Also, there is a lack of student body representation in student government.

I do not feel like I belong when I see or experience bullying or racism on social media.

ELEMENTARY

I need the opportunity to work in quieter spaces — whether that be in a classroom, module, hallway or outside. I need the option of using noise-canceling headphones; there should be enough for all students.

I need more opportunities to work in groups, especially with friends or with students of similar ability.

I need to work in a classroom with more space and fewer students.

I need comfortable and flexible seating — both in position (e.g. sit on floor) and style (e.g. rocking chair, wiggly ball). There should be alternative seating options for all, not just a few.

I need more brain breaks and more time for recess. Break times (e.g. recess and lunch) should be better spaced throughout the day.

MIDDLE

I need a distraction/disruption-free classroom. I need the ability to listen to music or use noise-canceling headphones to create a quiet space to work.

I need to work in a classroom with more space and fewer students.

I need teachers to slow down and explain the material more thoroughly. I need more time to ask questions and understand the content. I need more time to work on assignments or catch up on assignments. I need my teachers to communicate better about deadlines and missing work. Like in elementary school, I need brain breaks.

I need more opportunities to work in groups.

I need to learn more about different cultures, immigration and other histories besides American history.

HIGH

I need more time to build connections with teachers, staff and other students. I need more time for collaboration and group work. I need more communal time and communal spaces besides lunch. I need time to build friendships and have fun.

I need more hands-on learning or practical applications for difficult subject matter. I need instruction to be engaging, rather than one-way lecturing.

I need more time to process information and ask questions. I need more opportunities to seek extra help from teachers (e.g. Access). I need the district to bring back Early Release on Wednesdays so that I can get extra instructional support from my teachers, complete my work and build my social network. I need more flexibility from my teachers to make up assignments. I need my teachers to give me second chances.

I need better communication from my teachers. I need my teachers to set clear expectations and provide more information about what is needed to be successful in their classes. I need my teachers to be more responsive to my emails. I need my teachers to update Canvas more frequently with assignments and grades.

I need teachers and staff to stop paying lip service to mental health. Students are overwhelmed and stressed. You cannot say that you care about students' mental wellbeing and then not be willing to modify assignments/workloads.

ELEMENTARY

It is hard to learn when students are disruptive and take the teacher's time and attention away from class. These students are often loud and talk over the teacher.

It is hard to learn in overcrowded classrooms.

It distracts from my learning when school bathrooms are dirty, vandalized or not private.

It is hard to learn when teachers present the material too quickly and then move on, despite not all students understanding. It is hard when teachers set and use timers for lessons/assignments.

It is hard to learn when I am hungry or tired.

MIDDLE

It is hard to learn because of the distractions/disruptions in my classroom. For options school, the different middle and high school bell schedules are disruptive to learning.

It is hard to learn when teachers go through the material too quickly. It is hard to learn when teachers are not available or do not seem approachable for questions.

It is hard to learn when I do not know how to take notes or manage deadlines. I would benefit from the skills learned in AVID classes.

It is hard to learn when I can not use headphones/earbuds to block out distractions in class.

It is hard to learn when I am not allowed to take home my Chromebook or when BSD blocks access to some websites when I am trying to use them for research.

HIGH

It is hard to learn when I have an overloaded schedule (school, extra-curricular activities, employment, home life). It is hard to learn when teachers do not provide enough time to process the material and require so much work outside of school hours. It is difficult to learn on my own. Teachers are not available to help struggling students. It is hard to learn when I do not have reasonable timeframes to complete my schoolwork. The district needs to bring back Early Release on Wednesdays.

It is hard to learn when there's a lack of support and resources for mental health and well-being.

It is hard to learn when classes are too big and noisy.

It is hard to learn when there are few hands-on learning opportunities.

It is hard to learn when school starts so early.