



Southeast Guiding Coalition

Key Themes from Listening and Learning Sessions - Draft October 3, 2021

- Schools should offer culturally dynamic curriculum and activities that are reflective of the student body.
 - The richness of experiences and perspectives offered by the diversity at Harrison Park is widely accepted as one of the key features of the success of that school. Parents from other schools expressed a desire to see such diversity in their neighborhood school.
- PPS should provide an equitable distribution of programs among all neighborhood schools. Where you live should not dictate your child's educational experience.
- Critical importance of authentic interpersonal connections between students, families, and staff.
 - If K-8 schools need to be broken up, keep K-5 kids together.
 - The presence of community (language) liaisons to connect with BIPOC and historically marginalized communities is critical.
- Schools should foster environments where BIPOC students and families feel safe and have ample social emotional supports.
- Schools have the necessary staffing ratios, and instructional philosophies to promote Differentiated Instruction among students of all backgrounds, ability levels, and learning styles.
- Privilege should not drive access to programs: BIPOC and underserved families are disproportionately impacted by transportation barriers, to the extent that it effectively limits school choice among these communities.
- Asking families to choose between schools with proximity to their home and those offering more robust programs and service is unfair and disproportionately disadvantages BIPOC and historically underserved communities.
- Racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity is an asset to any school and crucial to making BIPOC students and families feel welcomed, seen, and valued.
 - BIPOC kids have other students and staff that look like them. Representation.
- Historical Devaluing of BIPOC Voices / Distrust of PPS' Processes / Accountability.
 - How do we ensure that the ultimate approach does not benefit one group at the expense of another?
- Most CSS parents attending the dialogue session expressed a desire for the school to remain a K-8. On the other hand, most Harrison Park dialogue session participants seemed to accept that their school will be transitioning to the K-5/MS model.



Supporting Quotes from Listening and Learning Sessions

“You can’t be respected until you’re acknowledged. As far as what my child needs: consistency and an acknowledgement of the historical trauma that our kids come with. But equally important is the acknowledgement of the historical strength and wisdom that they come with. I’m not a fan of the word, resilience, I hate that word resilience. And it’s because it’s weaponized, generally against marginalized communities. And it’s a way to say, hey, look, great job, you jumped another hoop while they’re putting another hoop for you to jump up, you know, like, great, stop calling us resilient and give us a chance to thrive. Because I’m over it. I’m over being resilient. I want to thrive”. – BIPOC Parent CSS

“My concern with this change is not being able to connect in the same way in this new school environment and just maybe isolating the kids a little bit from the community that they currently have, and not continue to foster the same level of togetherness that they have, the same level of you know, we’re all in this together. We’re learning together, maybe not at the same pace, but we’re all children of immigrants. We know someone who’s an immigrant, we know someone who speaks a different language. You know, English is not the one and only language, but it’s okay to be different. And it’s okay not to speak correctly, all the time, because it’s an environment where learning is encouraged”. – BIPOC parent at HP

“My biggest fear for him and his classmates is just to be at completely and entirely different schools and feel like they are less than the students that were there previously or their students that had that privilege to, to know a system that is different from the one that they’ve had”. – HP Parent

“Show the parents that you do care that inequality is not something that you will continue to do for the years to come and that you’re doing something about it. That will be reflected by not making people choose to go to other schools, because they know that they have the same opportunities in their neighborhood school, not making people choose to go in a lottery system because they think we will have other, better opportunities: providing that language at the middle school level so that we don’t feel like we have to fight for that one spot or that we have to live in the appropriate neighborhood in order to have the same level of education that someone who lives in that neighborhood has”. – BIPOC Parent at HP

“A really bad outcome would be just a change of boundary lines and not a change of much else; A lot more focus on just numbers and enrollment and how many kids we have at each school without thinking about all the other pieces that are going to be important”. – BIPOC parent at Lewis

“I would just love to know why there are not more people of color in the school. So far people have been great, but it’s kind of a little sad, because my daughter came home saying that nobody looked like her life and that it would be easier if she was a white boy”. – BIPOC Parent at CSS

“We should be teaching our kids to be proud of the diversity that they bring, to feel confident because they are able to speak a different language and learn another one on top of that, and to continue to do just as great as their peers. And I’m afraid that if we move in a direction where that’s not fostered, that the kids will feel withdrawn, and that the kids will really not feel welcomed in a new in a new environment where diversity is not recognized or seen”. – BIPOC parent at HP



“I guess I don’t trust the process, and I know that there are going to be folks with privilege, money, and power that will fight like hell to create the boundaries that they want that works for them and their real estate. So, I get tired. So, I guess my fear is that energy and effort put towards making something work for our needs and our kids will ultimately lead to serving some other group, some other folks”. – BIPOC parent at CSS

Key takeaways from September 23rd SEGC Meeting

Hopes and Aspirations

- Develop thoughtful long-term solutions instead of “quick fix” band aid approaches.
- The goal of increasing demographic diversity at the affected schools (including at the elementary level) should officially be part of the SEGC’s charge.
- Identify strategies for actively recruiting and retaining BIPOC teachers, administrators, and staff at PPS schools.
- Equalize distribution of programs, including providing age-appropriate elective options to middle grade students in K-8 facilities and expanding dual language programs across schools.
- Promote culturally centered schools that provide a sense of welcoming and belonging to all students and families, including immigrant communities.
- Invest in effective teaching and learning practices, such as project-based learning, to position all students for a successful transition to high school.
- Support the physical, social and emotional needs of all students by providing fairly distributed resources across schools to meet students’ basic needs and ensure that every student arrives ready to learn.

Doubts and Fears

- BIPOC students/families will feel devalued or excluded.
- Additional burdens will be placed on families that are already marginalized.
- Loud voices will threaten to derail the SEGC’s work.