

Reynolds School District Strategic Planning Focus Group Summary - November 2019

Public Consulting Group (PCG) facilitators conducted 18 focus groups and met with approximately 400 RSD community members from November 18-21, 2019. We met with various parent groups by race, ethnicity and home language; business leaders; faith-based leaders; community members at-large; middle school and high school students; and staff by subgroups.

The themes that emerged are based on the recorded comments, dozens of informal side conversations, observed emotion and reactions by the participants, and the facilitators shared recall immediately following the focus groups.

The methodology used was a SWOT Analysis with various protocols depending on the group makeup and needs. Every group was asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses (areas to improve), opportunities, and threats that they perceive for the Reynolds School District.

Strengths

- Diversity of the student population and community.
- Board of Education (diversity of the Board).
- There is a lot of hope and excitement around the new superintendent and cabinet leadership (with a bit of concern over the loss of institutional knowledge).
- The community is seen as supportive of the schools.
- Strong relationships and support from community partners.

Weaknesses

- Culture (adult) of fear and intimidation resulting in concerns of disrespect, racism, and lack of voice (student, staff and parent) including policies and procedures undermining school climate (for students).
- Equity issues pertaining to resource allocation and a feeling of cultural unresponsiveness.
- Lack of Human support services to address trauma, bullying, and mental health for students and staff and need for additional counselors, social workers, and behavioral/health specialists,
- Instruction concerns citing a culturally unresponsive curriculum lacking rigor and relevance and focusing too much on "the test".
- Structure of the school day with concerns over start times, quality (and cultural recognition) of food and nutrition, and overcrowded classes, busses and high school.

Opportunities

- Hiring practices focusing on more diversity to reflect the student population being served.
- Systemic and sustainable (follow-through) professional development that is aligned vertically and horizontally throughout the system.
- Alignment of policies and procedures that are culturally responsive and consistent throughout the system.
- The opportunity to engage the parents and community for time and talent and adult learning (and understanding how to navigate the system for their children).
- A strong sense that the time is now for a deep, courageous, and inclusive community conversation that unites the RSD education community.

Threats

- Safety from external threats and easy access to the schools, and internal threats of bullying, racism, and disrespect.
- Budget concerns resulting in overcrowding, lack of resources, and student options.
- Human Resources practices resulting in recruitment/retention staffing challenges, especially teachers of color, and a lack of staff diversity.
- Poverty issues interfering with student readiness to learn such as nutrition and hunger, mobility, professional support services.
- Community apathy and low expectations

(End summary)