



REYNOLDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Listening and Learning Summary: Reynolds SD Bond Planning

BR|IC

PREPARED FOR REYNOLDS SCHOOL DISTRICT BY BRIC ARCHITECTURE, INC. JANUARY 2023

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Introduction

In the fall of 2022, Reynolds School District, with the support of BRIC Architecture and the participation of Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) and Latino Network, conducted a series of 19 Listening and Learning sessions to gather input on community priorities for District investments.

These sessions were held with the dual purpose of informing the RSD School Board's 2023-2024 budget cycle, and to support the District's planning efforts for a future bond measure. This report details the key themes of this feedback.

While some of the themes identified here do not have specific facilities implications, participants often expressed a strong desire to be heard and understood by the District's leadership. As such, we have included the range of feedback we heard. We feel that this feedback, with consideration, can be translated into facilities implications.



Session Design and Facilitation

In total, 19 Listening and Learning sessions were held between October and December 2022. The District hosted four general sessions in October 2022: two for staff, and two for community members. The staff present at these sessions held various positions at schools across the district (including teachers, community liaisons, TOSAs and MTSS staff, librarians, and others). General community turnout was lower at these sessions, but District staff were able to hear from representatives from community partner organizations SEI and Latino Network, and two Spanish-speaking families.

In the open sessions, participants were divided into small groups. Each group had a facilitator present, a note-taker, and District staff representative. A facilitator guided the group through a series of questions.

In November, the District hosted a series of sessions aimed to create affinity spaces for community members, in collaboration with community partners. The November 1st session was held entirely in Spanish, and aimed to engage Latinx community members and families through Latino Network. The November 2nd session partnered with SEI to engage Black and BIPOC families, and the November 3rd session focused on other families facing educational inequities, especially families with children supported by specialized programs. Each session had culturally appropriate food for participants and interpreters available. In some of these sessions, District staff were not present at the discussion table to preserve the affinity of the space, and to create space for participants to speak honestly and candidly. Facilitators from BRIC Architecture guided the groups through a series of questions.

Ten student sessions were held between November 28th and December 1st to engage students at Reynolds Middle School and Reynolds High School. These student input sessions focused on centering students who are often deeply impacted by educational inequity: BIPOC and Latinx students, LGBTQIA+ students, recent arrivals to the school, and Eastern European students. These sessions were conducted in schools, with a series of questions, tailored to students, to support bond planning and budget planning.

Questions asked of participants in the sessions included the following (italicized questions were only asked in affinity groups):

- What is working well in our district for your students and family?
- What is not working in our district for your students and family?
- Do you feel that your school has strong ties in and with communities?
- In what ways do you feel connected to your school? What are the features of your current school that make you feel welcome, celebrated, and seen and why?
- What is the kind of space that would welcome creating a sense of belonging for ALL students? For their families?
- What does it mean for your child/student to be successful in school? To what degree does their current school provide this?
- What ideas do you have to create school spaces that better reflect marginalized communities, or communities that have not historically been represented?
- What changes and/or investments should we make to better support your students and/or family?
- We heard from community members in previous outreach that the top community priorities are Arts, Music, Sports; Mental Health Support; Staff Diversity and Cultural Training; Class size and Parent Engagement. Do these still feel like the top priorities for the district? Is there anything that should be expanded, or added? Anything that you feel is less important?
- If you had control of the budget, how would you prioritize spending to maximize student outcomes?

2 SESSION DESIGN AND FACILITATION

- Fast forward several years into the future and imagine that we have achieved true racial equity and social justice for all marginalized or underserved groups.
- If you could build your dream school, what would that look like? (this question was only asked in the student engagement sessions)

Parents and students from the following schools across the District participated in sessions (although this data was not collected at every session):

- Glenfair Elementary School
- Hartley Elementary School
- Wilkes Elementary School
- H.B. Lee Middle School
- Reynolds Middle School
- Reynolds High School

Additionally, the District ran an online survey in tandem with the in-person input sessions, which got 17 responses. These participants were a mix of District staff and parents/guardians.



GROUPS ENGAGED

- **Staff and Community** - October 11
- **Staff and Community** - October 27
- **Culturally Specific Sessions** - November 1, 2, 3
 - Latinx families (in collaboration with Latino Network)
 - Black Families (in collaboration with Self Enhancement Inc.)
 - Other families, especially those served by specialized programs
- **Student Input Sessions** in late November and early December:
 - Three session with BIPOC students at Reynolds Middle School
 - 9 sessions at Reynolds High School:
 - > LGBTQIA+
 - > Pacific Islander
 - > Latine
 - > IEP/504
 - > Eastern European
 - > African American
 - > Asian
 - > New Students to RHS
 - > ELD

19 sessions total

3 FEEDBACK THEMES



Feedback Themes

WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE PEOPLE ARE HAVING IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT?

What's going well?

- Communication is improving between parents, teachers, and administrators (ParentSquare is a huge plus).
- Programs at the schools are helping to keep kids and families engaged:
 - CTE programs
 - Dual language programs
 - Extracurricular activities and after school sports
 - Literacy and library programs
 - Wraparound services have improved
 - Health clinics offered at school are helpful
- Community partners are a trusted, important part of school life.
- Schools are highly diverse, with multiple languages and cultures present in the student body.
- People are noticing better relationships between the district and the community, and a focus on equity and inclusion.

- Staff care deeply about their students, and the District has been intentional about filling gaps (and hiring diverse staff), increasing access to mental health and social workers, and creating spaces for collaboration.

What's not going well?

- Staff need much more support to be successful: many are feeling burned out, unprepared and alone.
 - Educational Assistants are desperately needed in classrooms, and many feel that EAs are not paid enough to hire and retain staff in these critical positions.
 - In addition to EAs, participants felt that bus drivers, kitchen staff, and community liaisons were other staff that were not paid enough.
 - Many staff are being asked to do work that is not part of their role (for example, social workers end up as substitute teachers).
 - There's a sense that the system is not resilient enough: if one person leaves, or calls in sick, it has a dramatic ripple effect on others.
- People don't feel that students are safe at school: either from people who could come into the school, or from within the school itself.

3 FEEDBACK THEMES

- Nearly all RHS students engaged did not feel safe at school.
 - Bathrooms are not seen as a safe place for any students engaged at RHS.
 - Many noted fights and bullying happen at schools across the district.
 - Many felt there were not enough security personnel, and students felt that security staff (SRTs and SROs) did not always make them feel safer at school.
 - Some felt unsafe due to racism (both micro and macro aggressions).
 - Many students did not feel that they had access to a trusted adult to help them if they needed it.
 - Transportation to and from school is major barrier for many families.
 - Facilities don't inspire pride, and older buildings are seen as run down or dirty.
 - Technology either doesn't work, or presents a barrier to students, families, and teachers.
 - Many people don't feel connected to the District:
 - They don't see themselves reflected in District staff and see a high turnover of District administrators.
 - They feel that the District is disconnected from the everyday experience in schools.
 - They don't see schools as a place to access resources and support.
 - People are unsure (and distrustful) of how the District is currently spending it's budget.
 - The relationship between the District and community partners needs to be more defined:
 - Understanding the value partners add to the lives of families and students.
 - Building in feedback loops and opportunities for direct communication.
 - Many recognize that this District has intense academic needs:
 - Kids are behind their peers in other school districts, and more intervention spaces are needed.
 - Special Education programs need support and improvement.
 - Curriculums don't feel culturally sensitive or appropriate.
 - Students want to see more opportunities offered to them, for advanced placement courses, CTE, electives, and others.
 - Kids don't get enough time to eat, and food is of poor quality and lacking choices for students with dietary restrictions or preferences.
- When asked what students need to be successful, participants responded with the following needs:
- Support for students: both academic (including mentoring and tutoring opportunities), programmatic (more EAs and supports for specialized programs and restorative) and socioemotional (access to counselors and trusted adults, and restorative, rather than punitive, programs).
 - Representation, including the ability to see themselves and their communities reflected in staff and curriculum.
 - This includes bilingual and BIPOC staff and teachers, dual language and cultural programs.
 - Strong and consistent communication between schools and parents.
 - Technology that is right-sized, reliable, and accessible (especially to those who might not have Wi-Fi or computer access at home).
 - A safe learning environment.
 - A healthy school, which includes reliable structure and route, access to healthy food (and time to eat), and access to mental health resources.
- What are the features of your school that make you feel welcomed, celebrated, and seen?**
- Staff that looks like us, and our community
 - Engaging activities and cultural celebrations
 - Opportunities to connect
 - Flags and symbols in schools
 - New student programs
 - Assemblies, group gatherings and affinity groups

3 FEEDBACK THEMES

WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT TO SEE IN DISTRICT FACILITIES IN THE FUTURE?

We asked participants two questions about what they'd like to see in the future, and where they think the District should prioritize budget spending. Participants shared a range of ideas, many of which directly related to school facilities, outlined below. Additional priorities that don't directly relate to school facilities are also noted, to honor the feedback students, families and staff shared.

Key Facilities Priorities

School facilities should serve the programs students love, and the programs that will prepare them for the future they choose.

- Modernize libraries.
- Space for expanding programs like AVID.
- Improvement to the theater at RMS.
- Build a second high school.
- Space and facilities to provide engaging electives, especially at the Middle School level (dance, video production, etc).
- Exposure to different career opportunities (medical, for example).
- More CTE offerings.
- More specialized classrooms for students served by SPED, and ensure that SPED classrooms are appropriately designed to meet student and staff needs.

Invest in sports and athletics facilities across the District.

- Upgrade fields at the middle schools (for football and track).
- Expand athletic facilities at RHS: a sports stadium, a pool, and/or a second gym.
- Improve athletics facilities and locker rooms across the District.

Schools should have culturally specific spaces for BIPOC students to feel seen, appreciated and celebrated.

- Provide prayer rooms.
- Designate space for students to comfortably hang out, especially in affinity groups.
- Expand space for community partners.

Ensure that students, teachers, and staff are comfortable when at school.

- Improve heating and cooling systems.
- Improve entryways into schools to create a better sense of welcome.
- Improve cleanliness at schools and make them easier to maintain.

Improve and maintain existing District facilities.

- Renovate schools across the District, especially those that have not had any updates in a long time.
- Maintain buildings and equipment to ensure that students and teachers across the District have what they need.
- Improve outdoor areas and landscaping.
- Ensure that there is parity across the District, especially when building new facilities.
- Improve the traffic flows at schools to create smoother drop-offs and pick-ups.

Ensure that students, teachers, and staff are safe at school.

- Renovate and improve bathrooms at RHS (which are consistently seen by students and teachers as a safety issue).
- Consider ways to secure the perimeters of schools, both to keep potential intruders out, and to make sure students stay on campus.
- Incorporate tools to help staff and security personnel ensure student safety in school.
- If remodeling or constructing new buildings, widen hallways to ease congestion and improve safety during passing times.

Ensure everyone's health and wellbeing at school.

- Expand the Counseling offices and support at RHS.
- Create more spaces for self-regulation, and for students to step away when they need a break (especially for SPED students).
- Build a crisis center.
- Build expanded health centers at schools.
- Create spaces for quiet meditation and prayer.
- Make sure all students across the District have time and space to eat during mealtimes.
- Improve and expand cafeteria at RHS.
- Offer different meal choices for students, especially healthy options.

Improve technology.

- Provide better Wi-Fi access at schools.
- Improve PAs and sound systems.
- Ensure that technology is right-sized to meet pedagogical needs (for example, introduce new technology that will align with student and teacher needs, and support learning).

Additional Community Priorities

The following ideas for investments were gathered during outreach. While some of these do not have a direct correlation to school facilities, participants in sessions expressed a deep desire to be heard and understood by District staff and decision-makers. These ideas help illuminate the experiences and priorities of many of the District's BIPOC and historically underserved students and families.

Invest in safety and security:

- Hire more security personnel or ensure that there are more staff and teachers present during breaktimes.
- Ensure that SROs are trained and help students feel safer, not afraid.
- Enforce stricter rules around entry into buildings, students leaving campus during school hours, and safety overall across the District.
- In addition to physical safety, consider how students and staff feel emotionally safe, supported, and understood.
- Improve communications between the District, staff and students to ensure everyone is appropriately informed of any threats or incidents.

Invest in staff:

- Incentivize opportunities for EAs (tuition waivers, higher pay, or other tools) to keep and retain these critical roles.
- Higher pay for bus drivers, kitchen personnel, EAs, and other classified staff.
- Invest in onboarding, offboarding and specialized training for staff.
- Create more systems of teacher evaluation and provide opportunities for mentorship and peer support networks.
- Provide tech support for every building.
- Have District administrators and leaders experience 'a day in the life': substituting a class and spending more time in

schools to understand issues on the ground.

- As pedagogy shifts, ensure that staffing is considered thoughtfully (for example, if the District is moving toward an inclusion model for SPED, ensure that teachers have sufficient training and tools to support those students).
- Provide more guest speakers and training opportunities on equity.
- Hire interventionalists and mental health professionals.

Invest in programs that keep students interested and engaged:

- Increase CTE offerings, especially programs that start in middle school and that provide certifications to help students enter the job market.
- Increase after school sports programs.
- Increase music, dance and arts programs.
- Provide more extracurricular clubs and activities (especially in middle school) and give staff the resources they need to have a sense of ownership to lead these programs.
- Provide programs with low barriers to entry for kids living in poverty.
- Offer programs that parents and students can do together.
- Provide safe and reliable transportation home, especially after extracurricular activities.
- Offer more language classes.
- Offer programs that teach students real-world skills (including personal finance, taxes, career and post-school life options, etc.).

Invest in academic success:

- More one-on-one tutoring and check-ins between students and staff.
- Expanding AVID and College Possible programs to prepare students for life after high school.
- Strong support for a block schedule at secondary schools (for student outcomes, and to support teacher planning time).
- Provide dual language programs in all elementary schools.
- Keep class sizes small.
- Focus on building reading and literacy skills in younger students.

3 FEEDBACK THEMES

- Hire a District librarian, who can focus on the overall system (and not just individual libraries and programs).
- Increase the library's allocation of dollars spent per student.

Increase student support systems:

- Ensure that there are enough counselors for students to be able to have access to the support they need.
- Increase mental health support and consider how to best use MTSS staff.
- Provide mentoring to foster student leaders.
- Consider separating kids into skills-based groups and scaling learning to make sure students get what they need to succeed.
- Allocate more resources to McKenny Vento.
- Expand counseling opportunities to ensure that students have easy access to trusted adults.
- Invest in a healthy school for all:
 - Provide better food (especially healthy options).
 - Make sure students can make nutritional choices, offering foods for different dietary restrictions, and foods that kids want to eat.
 - Ensure that there is sufficient time and space for students to eat lunch.

Invest in community partners:

- Dedicate staff time to have a direct liaison with community partners and community-based organizations (CBOs), to build awareness and participation in services and training, and to troubleshoot any issues that may arise.
- Allocate staff time to co-create plans and strategies with community partners.
- Hold events to bring all community partners together, to build relationships and awareness with each other, and with the District.
- Invest in resources for community partners.

Invest in planning for the future:

- Invest in more communications staff.
- Intentionally research the 'why' behind consistent issues throughout the District (such as attendance).
- Build succession planning to ensure that systems are in place to maintain relationships and knowledge when staff

leave.

- Analyze the success of promotions and marketing.

Invest in supporting parents and caregivers:

- Academic programs for parents.
- Monthly educational seminars or workshops for parents to help them build awareness of the District, educational systems, and how they can best support their students.
- Incentivize participation in meetings and events.
- Consider paying parent volunteers or providing ways for parents to be more involved in schools that don't disadvantage some families.

Conclusion

While the topics raised by participants will certainly encompass more than the District can fund in a bond measure, many participants were eager to share their thoughts and perspectives with District leadership. Some were doubtful that their opinions would be heard and understood and noted a lack of trust with the District. However, nearly all participants expressed a deep desire for a school district that serves the needs of students, their families, and the staff who work within the District.

The top themes of feedback we heard most consistently can be summarized as the following:

- Build schools that will serve the needs of students and families, with the programs that help them thrive.
- Improve and expand sports facilities across the District.
- Schools should have culturally specific spaces for BIPOC students to feel seen, appreciated and celebrated.
- Invest in safety and security measures, so that students, teachers, and families feel that schools are safe places.
- Ensure that school facilities support everyone's physical, mental and socio-emotional wellbeing.
- Make sure schools are comfortable and well-maintained.
- Improve technology (including basic things like Wi-Fi access) to best serve teaching and learning objectives.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FROM SESSIONS

Participants generously provided feedback on how to best engage families and communities in future events. Some of that feedback includes:

- Community partners have a strong desire to work more closely with the District. When planning events, ensure there is plenty of notice, and that events are not scheduled during times when partners are on break.
- Involve community partners in the planning, recruitment, and facilitation of District engagement events.
- Many people would like to attend more in-person events at schools, and feel more connected to life in Reynolds. Some ways that this can be accomplished is by:
 - Make sure there are bilingual staff present at events, and the opportunity to meet in affinity groups.
 - Continue to provide culturally specific foods at in-person events, childcare, and align with other District-wide events to minimize time away from family and work.
- While many participants liked that more information is provided in languages other than English, some noted that the translations are often not great and need to be revised.

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