

Oct 20, 2025 Board Listening Session Notes

In attendance:

Staff

Carren Tallman

Kat Root

Mary Lee

Tamara Johnson

Nicole Cole

Ruth Faulconer

Tina Goodnight

Molly Fahlenkamp

Lacey Gorrod

Laura Thayer

Administrators:

Jon Morris

Niki Swanson

Angie Hedges

Kristin Lummio

Board:

John Hctor

Betty Richards

Chris Siebert

Chris Twohy

Deborah Heart

Introductions and What's going well

Round Robin 1 - start with the person to the left of the board member - and go around the table:

- Name
- Why you wanted to participate this evening

Round Robin 2

What's going well? Please share one thing that is going well this school year in your school/department.

Kat wants to be sure we have clear communication.

Jasha wants to know more about specific events

Laura came because she was asked

Chris want to be more involved and is connected to the school. He wants to know what is happening more in the school.

Discussion about transparency and communication. School Board didn't know about new noirse parade - leftover frustrations from covid

Mary - curious

Tamara - better connection

Molly - interested in listening

Mary - prepping for all upcoming stuff. Homecoming was fun

Tamara - 4th grade - great team, going well, love 2 teachers

Molly - student engagement is up, family engagement good too. OMSI has come twice, e-games is going well, StoryMaker, field trips. GEAR UP received the grant for grade 6!

Students are falling into comfortable pace. Exciting things for students (dissecting squid).

Working with discipline, for lthe most part, no real rude students. Appreciate willingness to own behavior.

JH: Where is most of your time AD/AP? Probably AD. Two jobs with only one person. Would like to problem solve.

Students excited to be at school Staff is very dedicated, cares for kids. More patient with some than others, but spending time to problem solve.

Focus on kids. Communication at MS improved in SPED.

Spanish speaking students are speaking English and excited about it!

Culture of GMS and math in particular has undergone a major shift in culture. Kids are more willing to engage and believe in their math ability.

Reading groups are going well - team has become very strong, especially in dealing with SEL – it seems that behaviors are better - needs are being met.

¾ maturity is better than in past years - kids are responding to adults better.

Board Governance

How is the board doing with governance? What would you like to see?

The board only knows what they are told, they want to fix, but need to know what is broken.
We went through the grievance process - the board is the last step. There could/should be a step process to show everyone the chain of command, examples - types of complaints.
Things that should come to the board - broken chain of command, following policy that is broken
Should all problems come to the board? Can the board get behavior data?
People need to know about the procedures.

The board does a good job with updating policies and procedures, making sure we are in compliance.
Sometimes community doesn't understand the process of adding policies - mainly driven through law, OSPI
Lots of policies needing to change, adapt. Sometimes people at meetings don't understand.
Curious how often policies need to be updated.
It's a hard job - would being in school help board know which policies need to be updated?
If a policy is changed or added, how do schools/employees know about the change?

Supported by the board. Appreciate coming to source when hear something vs continuing gossip to community.
Helpful to ask about the end game - part of solution or problem
Appreciate listening session, reflection of idea in plan.
How do we get all representatives at meetings vs just people that have a complaint?
Educating others about role of board meeting na dit is not a free for all, but business meeting in public.
How to allow people to be heard - but not at a board meeting? Open listening session>
Appreciate strategic plan and community session + alignment.
Would like more information on how to ask for resource allocation (other than just business manager) process for planning ahead with board?

It's hard to lead well if you don't know the reality of teaching/being in the classroom. Community members don't feel that they can openly and directly communicate with board.
Things need to be simplified for the community – those not in education often don't understand the language.jargon
Get info straight from the source - we are all working together
I would like to see board in the school more frequently so you can make policies that truly impact student growth. Like the game of telephone messages can get lost along the chain or its way to you.

To learn more and share concerns
To be better informed and share concerns.

Lines of Communication

What makes good board/staff communication?

How would you suggest the board balances their desire to listen and ensuring that the chain of command is followed?

Deborah said the board is not supposed to talk directly to teachers where they might be micro managing.

How would the board get information?

Someone suggested directly and unpredictably show up in classrooms

Maybe more check ins with staff

We talked about sub pay for paras and teachers. There is burn out when there isn't enough behavior help.

Is there board/staff communication?

Where do you find the recorded meetings?

Could meetings be livestreamed?

Desire to see what is happening in buildings - awards assemblies, activities

WSSDA advises boards to avoid day to day operations, but how do you get to know? Noise parade is an example - board didn't know and should have.

Action after talk - create policies

More direct communication for board regarding meetings, policies - not go to the website.

Idea - survey from board asking staff what's going well and ideas for change?

Board does not hear a lot - fewer contact with public/staff unless hot butto issue

Appreciate communication from CT to NS regarding noise parade, black uniforms

Will listen to anyone about anything. Then send back to the source if that doesn't work, come back(folks don't come back)

Ask questions about data or where questions arise

Part of data dig to hear conversation? Amount of work that goes into what we do? Can speak first hand on knowledge

Work really hard to create this environment, provide time and space, then hear complaints about themselves/environment from others

Board: People don't come to us about what is going well - just to complain

Board: Staff can divide board, but board good at directing back through chain of command and discuss with each other.

Staff feel like they are mainly unable to easily communicate with board. Put board minutes in a way that all community members could understand - help bring back the unity.

Clarity is vital. Things can get muddled in wordiness. Be clear and try to communicate frequently to help be transparent/open. Widen out the community involvement

Staff can feel lost and unheard by board. Boards presence will help make staff feel seen and heard.

Board members should be at school events. Picture of board members at events on social media.

Feels like the board is facing some tough challenges.

Understand the board has many difficult choices to make to benefit schools as a whole

How can we help/teach the chain of command throughout the school district?

Strategic Plan

What will it take to be great?

What are we willing to do to get there?

There are a lot of training, support, planning that need to be done so everyone can understand it.

What is the background of the strategic plan?

The greatness can't come without behavior support. Smaller class sizes, training, intervention, small groups.

There isn't enough money from the state to cover things.

How many people don't have internet in our community?

How is there a better way to get the info out or back?

What exactly is the strategic plan? The multipage document and overview at staff day>

Get kids more invested in education - the measure can be skewed (state tests)

Growth - specific - can be hard to meet that can equate to failure

iReady is a tool we use to look for improvement, kid friendly, more prompts results, helpful to everyone

Does this help students thrive? Student centered?

Would have liked to see concrete graduate skills 'soft skills'

Was survey sent to kids?

(The plan) is short, easy to read for families.

Follow through and adapt

Data analysis and alignment

Big picture areas need to be more specific/less eduspeak - so all stakeholders have access.

Celebrate growth, but not enough - continue to build on success and not become complacent

Limited resources compared to networking schools. TOSA, curriculum dir, intervention specialists

All are doing specialties that we are not specialized in.

Re-allocation of staff does not necessarily mean that we have qualified staff for those positions.

Great will take ALL stakeholders to buy in: Students, families, staff, etc. Some families are at the very basic level of survival.

Very basics of language to help our families buy in.

Teacher accountability needs to improve. Everyone needs to enforce and support the school/district rules. Admin needs to support/encourage and back teachers.
We need pride and accountability. Support in the basics - reading/writing. Students that want to learn are being brushed aside for those that have huge behaviors. Kids are not showing respect and are not motivated to do better.
Must solve behavior and accountability issues. Students have very little reason/motivation to change behavior and without any consequences, there is no reason to learn or do school work. Way too much time is spent on students with poor behavior. It is unfair to those that just want to learn. We are losing kids to homeschool/online because they are tired of dealing with poor behavior and loss of learning time.

Building a culture or change culture - move away from 'me' throughout.
We need to get rid of the I and be a team.

What else?

What do you wish we had asked and how would you answer it?

Kat mentioned that we should have a better indication of how the community will react. We need to make sure we are ahead of an issue. There could be a way to educate the public that would help people to understand if they came to the work session.

Video is available from the district website. Maybe the video could be a facebook page for the district or parentsquare.

There were some discussion about where things should be posted and how to get more people involved. People may not know where to find things. Others talked about how much time was spent without a lot of response.

Students and families are struggling with big things: mental health, drugs, prison, new lense fo our community and expectations moving forward.

More professionalism within staff and between staff/students. Parapros have reported feeling they are treated differently

Culture of collaboration and appreciation, celebrate staff

VP in every building

People don't understanding funding of schools High needs population with limited resources and limited parenting skills

Wish people would come to problem areas or questions with a solution mindset

Civil conversation around whatever the issue might be

How do we get civil discourse with some positive people to help with frustrations?

More of a curious mindset vs attaching or accusing or threatening.

We need your presence IN the classes

Accountability – not allowing kids at events or trips if they are not eligible

You can't govern if you don't know the day to day reality.

Making policies that make us GREAT

Bring back the pride – stop eliminating the things that the kids LOVE.

Bring back the reward system and only allow kids that earn it to participate.

Positivity is contagious - bring back the focus on everything good.

Bring back off campus lunches for honor role.

Does the board know how the students feel about these 'rules'?

How do we get tswaff to want to change?

How do we help students feel comfortable at school?

How do these small 'issues' affect the students learning?

How do we stop rewarding with food?

Why or what are the we missing that students need in order to learn and do better statewide?

What do we need to change?