



Community Engagement Report

LEWISTON-ALTURA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ISD #857

**ENGAGEMENT MEETING #1: “DID YOU KNOW?”
Discovery Discussion Results**

Hosted at Lewiston Community Center
May 26, 2022

Meeting Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Table of Contents

Event Overview..... 3

Demographics.....3

Summary..... 3

Discovery Discussion.....4

Discovery Discussion Analysis Report5-9

Discovery Discussion Raw Data.....10-18

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT | **EVENT OVERVIEW**

LEWISTON-ALTURA SCHOOL DISTRICT Engagement Meeting #1: “Did You Know?”

May 26, 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Participants | Approx. 133 adults, 20 children, 8 HS student helpers

Silent (1945 and earlier) | 0

Baby Boomer (1946 – 1964) | 19

Gen X (1965 – 1984) | 57

Millennial (1984 – 2004) | 29

Gen Z (2004 to 2012) | 8

Alpha (2013 to Present) | 20

Note: Of the 120 participants, 93 people completed the Sign-in sheet.

SUMMARY, OVERVIEW

On Thursday, May 26, 2022, approximately 133 members of the Lewiston-Altura community came together for a community engagement meeting to learn about the schools and provide input on the district’s future. Participants were provided information in a series of “Fun Facts” throughout the room and through a presentation on the financial and facility planning process the district has been working through over the past year. Superintendent Carmen spoke to current “State of the District” and the purpose of the planning process and partnership with InGensa.

After the presentation, participants were encouraged to share their feedback in writing via the *Discovery Discussion*, a small-group discussion activity and a short survey enabling their opinions and needs to be formally recorded. Community members were very engaged in the discussion and shared some very good information and honest feedback during the report out activity.

LEWISTON-ALTURA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, May 26, 2022

DISCOVERY DISCUSSION INSTRUCTIONS

Directions: Form a group of 5-6 people. Try to join a group of people you don't know well.

Identify a scribe and write down the names of the members of your group. Read the questions and have a brief discussion about which questions you think are most important to answer. Answer the questions that you believe are most important to answer starting with the most important to least important.

Questions for Discussion (10-15 minutes per question/Choose any 3-5 questions to answer):

1. Do you believe the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools have challenges (i.e. budget and or building challenges)? What are they?
2. Is there anything positive you'd like to say about Lewiston-Altura Public Schools? What keeps your children here in our district?
3. Given the current financial situation of the district, what advice do you have for the board as they move forward with planning?
4. As the board and planning committee starts to work through this process, what questions would you like to see answered?
5. Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn't? Please share the question and your answers to it as well!

DATA & ANALYSIS

METHODOLOGY

We utilized the Discovery small-group discussions to ask questions that were designed to provoke open, honest feedback from participants on the information presented. A total of 133 people participated in the first of three engagement meetings and there were 18 discussion groups and 2 individual responses.

We have included the instructions distributed to community discussion participants above. In these instructions, we encouraged participants to focus on the 3-5 questions most important to their discussion group, and some groups elected to answer all questions as indicated in their notes document.

As a result, questions were ranked as indicated in the report that follows based upon those entries receiving the greatest number of responses from the greatest number of participating groups who submitted notes. This raw response rank has been noted under each individual question in the aggregated raw response transcript attached to this report.

QUESTION ONE

We asked: Do you believe the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools have challenges (i.e. budget and or building challenges)? What are they?

This question received a total of 73 individual responses from all 18 discussion groups and 2 individuals (for total of 20). This makes it the **highest traction item** of this Discovery Discussion based upon volume of participant responses.

Facility Upgrades

Twelve out of the 20 groups/individuals that responded to this question cited concerns about the buildings, including the age of the facilities and the improvements needed around classroom updates, the mechanical systems, aesthetics, and space at the High School. “Buildings haven’t been upgraded,” Building – age of buildings/outdated facilities – unattractive aesthetically,” and yes, outdated building hindering student ability to learn. Staff/custodians can’t give attention to educ – distractions” were a few of the comments made regarding the facilities.

Declining Enrollment

Concerns about declining enrollment were discussed by multiple groups. Respondents recommended looking for ways to compete with other schools around Lewiston-Altura and researching how to keep incoming 9th grade students.

Funding and Budget

Challenges with funding and increased costs were mentioned by 13 of the 20 groups that responded. One group stated, “Absolutely! Lack of funds prevents improvements.” Another group listed their concern as, “Budget constraints – causing a large amount of teachers/staff to leave now with threat of firing in future.”

Right-sizing District

“Do we really need the school in Altura?” was a question asked by one group in relation to this question. Five groups commented on the need to downsize or decrease the number of buildings in the Lewiston-Altura District.

Quality Staff and Education

Many groups that responded to this question had questions or concerns about retaining quality staff and improving educational programming opportunities for students. “Quality of education is a major concern. A high-quality education draws people to the community. Maintaining teachers that perform and provide quality education is being overlooked” was a comment made by one group, while two groups asked how we can compete with other schools in the area.

Other

All comments related to question two can be found in the Raw Data at the end of the report, however a couple of main themes are included below.

- Safety and Security
- Communications
- Maintenance, cleanliness, and pest control
- Attracting new residents/families to the community

QUESTION TWO

We asked: *Is there anything positive you'd like to say about Lewiston-Altura Public Schools? What keeps your children here in our district?*

Sixteen of 20 discussion groups submitted notes addressing this question, generating 61 total responses among them, and making this the **second highest traction question** of this Discovery Discussion. Following are some of the most common themes.

Small Community/Community Support

“Community involvement – seems like people really care,” “Small community and community support,” and “Community support and pride” were a few of comments listed recognizing the value the community brings to the district.

Opportunities for Students

“Good opportunity for students to participate in activities; bigger schools are selective with participants – leading to kids able to participate in many things/be well-rounded.” Members from 9 of 16 groups cited the activities and various programs offered at all levels as positive. “Great music program,” “Leveled reading program – kids are learning at their level,” “Early childhood program/special ed, cost for pre-school & Cardinal Club,” and “Good with special education” were additional comments in this category.

Participants made several positive comments about the extracurricular opportunities including, “Student involvement in multiple extracurricular activities,” and “Volunteerism and community assistance projects.”

Staff

“Bravo teachers! – higher quality education” was a comment that stood out in recognition of the staff at Lewiston-Altura. Eleven of the 16 groups noted Staff as a positive, and several responses in this category mention the quality of the teaching staff. Also mentioned in relation to staff were the following comments, “Teacher involvement – they know students and they CARE,” “Individualized attention available when needed,” “Staff who cares and stays,” and “Very good teachers that make an impact” are a few of the comments in this category.

Participants made several positive comments about the inclusive and supportive atmosphere in Lewiston-Altura Public Schools. “Inclusive environment,” “Individualized attention available when needed” and “Feel safe” were additional comments reflecting a welcoming and safe environment created by staff.

Small Class Sizes

Appreciation for the small school feel and the small class sizes was expressed by 8 of the 16 groups responding to this question.

QUESTION THREE

We asked: *Given the current financial situation of the district, what advice do you have for the board as they move forward with planning?*

Eighteen of 20 discussion groups/individuals submitted a total of 42 responses to this query, making question three the **third highest traction item** of this Discovery Discussion.

The greatest number of comments were around continuing to communicate and educate the public and emphasis was placed with the possibility of closing a building as a recommendation. Below are the recommendations for moving forward by category.

What advice do you have for the board as they move forward with planning?

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Like News from the Nest ▪ Like the newsletter! ▪ Truly listen to public comments ▪ The formulas: this is new to us and the community needs to stay informed/be educated too! ▪ Transparency ▪ Ask for support |
| Close Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Close a building ▪ Close Altura ▪ Consider closure of Intermediate School if in the best interest of the district ▪ Closing Altura would be hard, but might be necessary ▪ Consolidation of campuses will need to happen |
| Pursue Funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How are we getting funding? ▪ Continue pushing the state to reform the education funding model ▪ Referendum ▪ Explore different/unique funding options ▪ Don't aim too low with operating levy: it has to work! ▪ |
| Explore Options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to establish a proper balance of buildings and safety vs. proper education ▪ Explore all options...keep it open ▪ Prioritize based off of need ▪ Daycare facilities and options ▪ Redesign being a medium/small & design quality programs based on this ▪ Looks at all options ▪ Thoroughly explore all options and be upfront with community about decisions |
| Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing development in Altura ▪ Pressure the city to add more housing of all types ▪ More housing – all types ▪ Housing for people coming to Lewiston |
| Facility Updates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add on auditorium ▪ Science labs ▪ Libraries ▪ If an auditorium is built, where can it go |
| Other Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kids not prepared for college – higher expectations, academically challenging courses ▪ Why do we have to hire outside group to figure this out? ▪ The board will have to sell the final decision ▪ Hiring InGensa is a good move ▪ Retain quality staff |

| | |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suck it up & make tough decisions ▪ The advice is to maintain what we have and where we are at – not cut ▪ Continued community support ▪ Bussing could be improved to help w/open enrollment – other schools have vans that pick up students from Winona ▪ Competing for open enrollment. Rushford & St. Charles - both communities have better FACs ▪ If you do what you always did you'll get what you always got |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

QUESTION FOUR

We asked: *As the board and planning committee starts to work through this process, what questions would you like to see answered?*

Fifteen out of 20 discussion groups submitted notes on this topic for a collective total of 28 individual responses, making this **the fourth highest traction question** of the Discovery Discussion. Major themes are listed below.

Enrollment

Respondents spoke to concerns about declining enrollment and the recommended the district explore the reasons families leave the district and reasons families choose to open enroll into the district.

One question asked was if the district does exit interviews with families that leave the district, or seeks reasons from those who opt to enroll into the district. Another group recommended, “Survey families that are choosing to send their children to L.A. from outside the district to see what decisions & reasons are for coming in.”

Closing Altura School

Groups that participated in this question would like to have more information on the option to close Altura School. Listed are the comments and questions regarding Altura School.

1. Specifics on the middle school – what is it like? What specifically are the issues?
2. What is the cost savings benefit of 2 vs. 3 schools?
3. If closed, what would happen to the Altura School?
4. How many kids are in Altura area?
5. Efficient facilities for our size
6. Will they close Altura?
7. How much \$ saved if we close Altura?

Options & Financial Impact

“Specific examples of how much property tax would increase, for ex: home value x before increase y after increase z,” and “Financials associated with each option/solution,” are comments that indicate community members would like to receive more information on the financial impact to tax payers.

“We would like to see more information about specifics – what individual students bring in financially, and how that has decreased.” “What specifically are they looking at decreasing and what would go first?” are overall budget questions that were raised.

Community/Parent/Staff Involvement

Recommendations to involve parents with school-aged children and unite the community to support the changes that are needed were presented by two groups. One group recommended consulting all staff during the planning process, while another group mentioned the importance of “Transparency – communication.”

QUESTION FIVE

We asked: *Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn’t? Please share the question and your answers to it as well!*

This open-ended question received responses from 10 out of 20 groups, making it the ***fifth highest traction*** question of the Discovery Discussion. The key themes included:

1. Communicating the financial options available and impact on district and community
2. Researching what other area schools are doing in communities of similar size
3. Increasing parent and community involvement
4. Questions about impact of budget reductions on students and staff

Comments and questions offered for this item included, “What will happen if district does grow – how much time will be given to determine, what will we do?” “Stay open minded and listen to parents,” “We’d like to know how the updates/projects would impact our taxes and for how long,” and “Overall – good school district.”

DISCOVERY DISCUSSION | **RAW RESPONSE DATA AGGREGATE**

Question 1: Do you believe the Lewiston-Altura Public Schools face challenges (i.e. budget and or building challenges)? What are they?

Response groups: 20/20 - 18 groups and 2 individual responses

Total responses: 73

Raw response rank: 1/5

[Group 1 Response]

- Quality of education is a major concern. A high-quality education draws people to the community. Maintaining teachers that perform and provide quality education is being overlooked.

[Group 2]

- Lack of funds to move forward
- Nothing to attract people to move in
- How do we compete with the schools around us?

[Group 3]

- More communication to parents from school and teachers
- Good teachers leaving – How do we keep? Support from admin/parents
- Lunch program – pretzel is NOT lunch or run out of food
- Rodent issue!
- Why is our school year extended til 2nd week of June?
- Facility upgrades & updates

[Group 4]

- Yes, Building
- Budget
- Serious mechanical needs – per initial report
- Continue to properly allocate based on needs
- Safety
- Satisfy ability to properly educate

[Group 5]

- Decrease # of buildings
- Cleaner up-to-date buildings
- Keeping quality staff

[Group 6]

- Yes, \$ has always gone down. You can't plan for everything and there is always maintenance.

[Group 7]

- Absolutely! Lack of funds prevents improvements
- No draw to move to Lewiston – no grocery store and other amenities
- How can we compete with other schools in the area?
- How to keep incoming 9th grade students?

[Group 8]

- Yes – both [budget and building challenges] and enrollment
- Inadequate revenue
- Building operational costs
- Building – age of buildings/outdated facilities – unattractive aesthetically

[Group 9]

- Yes – HS building space
- Concerns regarding building structures
- Turnover
- Administration – transparency
- Programming for education

[Group 10]

- Declining enrollment
- Multiple schools in district
- Drug use
- Respect (lack of)
- Digital distractions in the classrooms

[Group 11]

- Finances
- Increased funding from state
- Declining numbers of students
- Downsize elementary

[Group 12]

- Both – budget = enrollment
- High cost of living, high water bills
- Buildings haven't been upgraded
- Do we really need the school in Altura?
- 1 member in the group is open enrollment (parent grad for LA)

[Group 13]

- Yes, outdated building hindering student ability to learn. Staff/custodians can't give attention to educ – distractions
- Budget constraints – causing a large amount of teachers/staff to leave now with threat of firing in future
- Safety issue at entries to high school – would like visual of outside visitors at door, able to open HS doors if pulled hard enough

[Group 14]

- Enrollment
- Funding going down
- Altura building
- Arts don't have their own spaces
- Schedule issues w/band/music

[Group 15]

- Playground equipment
- Declining enrollment – need to address long term
- Safety of HS entrance

[Group 16]

- Upgrade the buildings within budget
- Teachers that want to be involved
- Upgrade classrooms
- Pest control – mice at HS
- Parent involvement – increase

[Group 17]

- Yes, declining enrollment
- Entry security
- Facility updates

[Group 18]

- Budget
- Building challenges

[Group 19]

- Building – labs & auditorium
- Finances

[Group 20]

- Finances
- Adding an Auditorium
- Science classes

Question 2: Is there anything positive you'd like to say about Lewiston-Altura Public Schools? What keeps your children here in our district?

Response groups: 16/20

Total responses: 61

Raw response rank: 2/5

[Group 3]

- Small community – community support
- Small class size

[Group 4]

- Retention
- Teacher involvement – they know students and they CARE
- Smaller class size/district
- Activities
- Comradery
- Community involvement

[Group 5]

- Small community family oriented
- Character building for students/athletes
- Affirmations for students through activities & teaching
- Inclusive environment
- Communication is improving

[Group 6]

- Small class sizes
- Good community – getting to really know kids
- No violence in the schools
- Great music program
- Phy Ed every day
- More help for kids that need it
- Great library - librarians
- Leveled reading program – kids are learning at their level

[Group 9]

- Bravo teachers! – higher quality education

[Group 10]

- Community support
- Convenience
- Small community
- Small classrooms
- Student involvement in multiple extracurricular activities

[Group 11]

- Volunteerism and community assistance projects
- Staff has always been good

[Group 12]

- Individualized attention available when needed
- Community involvement – seems like people really care
- Students don't get left behind

[Group 13]

- Smaller class sizes
- Rural setting
- Supportive community/school
- Generosity
- Good opportunity for students to participate in activities, bigger schools are selective with participants – leading to kids able to participate in many things/be well-rounded

[Group 14]

- Teachers and Staff
- Early childhood program/special ed, cost for pre-school & Cardinal Club!
- School spirit
- Community support and pride
- Small classrooms

[Group 15]

- Good with special education
- Staff who cares and stays
- Small size
- Teachers' connections with students
- Supportive caring close friendships, friendly
- Great music/drama program
- Extracurriculars

[Group 16]

- Small community and community support
- Very good teachers that make an impact
- Feel safe

[Group 17]

- Smaller class sizes
- Location
- Smaller community
- Family is in area

[Group 18]

- We have a great staff & faculty on all levels who engage with our kids & know who they are
- The Intermediate school is a good transition/step for students before jumping into the High School

[Individual 19]

- Friendly community
- Good staff

[Individual 20]

- Everybody cares about District 857

Question 3: Given the current financial situation of the district, what advice do you have for the board as they move forward with planning?

Response groups: 18/20

Total responses: 42

Raw response rank: 3/5

[Group 1]

- Continue pushing the state to reform the education funding model

[Group 2]

- Like News from the Nest
- How are we going to get funding?

[Group 3]

- Kids not prepared for college – higher expectations, academically challenging courses

[Group 4]

- Continue to establish a proper balance of buildings and safety vs. proper education

[Group 5]

- Close a building
- Suck it up & make tough decisions
- Close Altura
- Referendum
- Why do we have to hire an outside group to figure this out?
- The board will have to sell the final decision

[Group 7]

- Like the newsletter!
- Truly listen to public comments
- Hiring InGensa is a good move
- Explore different/unique funding options

[Group 8]

- Retain quality staff
- Explore all options...keep it open
- Housing development in Altura
- Don't aim too low with operating levy: It has to work!
- The formulas: This is new to us and the community needs to stay informed/be educated too!

[Group 9]

- Transparency
- Continued community support

[Group 10]

- Prioritize based off of need
- Consider closure of Intermediate School if in the best interest of the district

[Group 11]

- Add on Auditorium
- Science labs
- Libraries
- Pressure the city to add more housing of all types
- Daycare facilities and options

[Group 12]

- Bussing could be improved to help w/open enrollment – other schools have vans that pick up students from Winona
- Competing for open enrollment. Rushford & St. Charles both communities have better FACs

[Group 13]

- Closing Altura would be hard, but might be necessary

[Group 14]

- If you do what you always did you'll get what you always got
- Ask for support
- If you don't make changes what will happen?
- Redesign being a medium/small & design quality programs based on this.

[Group 16]

- Consolidation of campuses will need to happen
- If an auditorium is built, where can it go – look at all options

[Group 17]

- Thoroughly explore all options and be upfront with community about decisions

[Group 18]

- The advice is to maintain what we have and where we are at – not cut

[Group 19]

- More housing – all types

[Group 20]

- Housing for people coming to Lewiston

Question 4: As the board and planning committee starts to work through this process, what questions would you like to see answered?

Response groups: 15/20

Total responses: 28

Raw response rank: 4/5

[Group 1]

- How can we compensate teachers similar to other school districts so our good teachers aren't leaving?

[Group 2]

- Will they close the Altura School?

[Group 3]

- How do you plan to cut elective classes when the students already run out of choices their Jr/Sr year?

[Group 4]

- Financials associated with each option/solution

[Group 5]

- Board needs to consult all staff
- How can we ask questions when we don't know what the questions are?
- How much \$ saved if we close Altura?

[Group 6]

- We would like to see more information about specifics – what individual students bring in financially, and how that has decreased
- What specifically are they looking at decreasing and what would go first?
- Specifics on the middle school – what is it like? What specifically are the issues?

[Group 7]

- Close the Altura School?
- How can we unite our community to support changes that are needed?
- How to involve parents with school-aged children
- Custodial staff is lacking – take care of what we have

[Group 8]

- Efficient facilities for our size
- Are we maximizing our revenue streams?
- Does the district do an exit interviews w/families that leave (why), or those that opt in?

[Group 9]

- Transparency – communication
- Community involvement
- What percentage PSEO?

[Group 12]

- Specific examples of how much property tax would increase, for ex: home value x before increase y after increase z

[Group 13]

- How will we create consistency with admin staff/teachers – stability – lower staff turnaround?

[Group 15]

- What is the cost savings benefit of 2 vs.3 schools?
- How many kids are Altura area?
- If closed, what would happen to the Altura School?

[Group 17]

- Why are we focusing on buildings and enrollments instead of focusing on underlying causes of enrollment drop?

[Group 18]

- Survey families that are choosing to send their children to L.A. from outside the district to see what the decisions & reasons are for coming in

[Group 19]

- Student enrollment is declining

Question 5: Is there any question/comment that we should have asked but didn't? Please share the question and your answers to it as well!

Response groups: 10/20

Total responses: 22

Raw response rank: 5/5

[G1]

- What are other schools with communities of similar size doing?
- How do schools even smaller than Lewiston-Altura provide quality education that attracts families?

[G2]

- The state can step in and close the Altura Intermediate when we are operating in the red
- How to involve school-aged parents

[G3]

- A cost analysis of keeping Altura School open?
- If increasing class sizes & decreasing electives?

[G5]

- Stop trying to make this fun – this is going to be hard & painful
- Why are we spending all this \$ on food when the district is in financial trouble?

[G9]

- Why do our admin/teachers, staff transition quickly?
- Trends?
- Do we have understanding?

[G12]

- Concerns about lack of things to do in the community – no pool/library
- Crossing is an excellent addition
- Overall – good school district
- Late starts are a hardship for open enrollment student – issues & transportation
- Would love to see an auditorium at the high school - lots of conflicts & gym time

[G13]

- What will happen if district does grow – how much time will be given to determine, what will we do?
- Transparency needed where money will be used

[G17]

- Is the school district and city working together?

[G18]

- Class sizes of 30+ students would be concerning and would compromise the quality of education

[G19]

- More daycare
- School safety