

District 97 Community Conversations

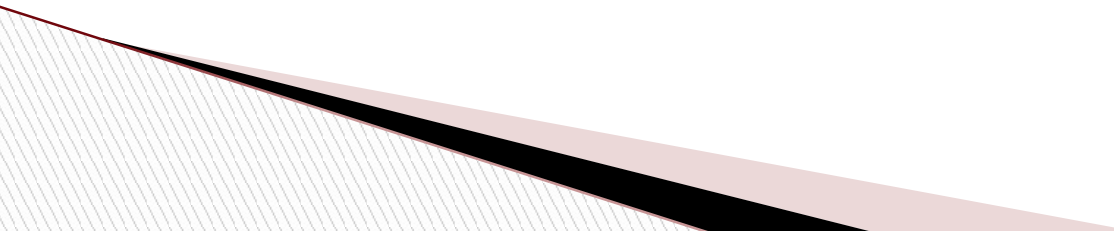
Summary of Findings
Presented to the Superintendent's Advisory Panel
May 11, 2016



Overview

»» Process &
Participation

Community conversations process

- ▶ 13 sessions held between April 16th – 30th
 - ▶ Used a common set of questions for all adult groups
 - ▶ Used a common set of questions for all student groups – same themes as adults but more tailored to their experiences in schools
- 

Community conversations statistics

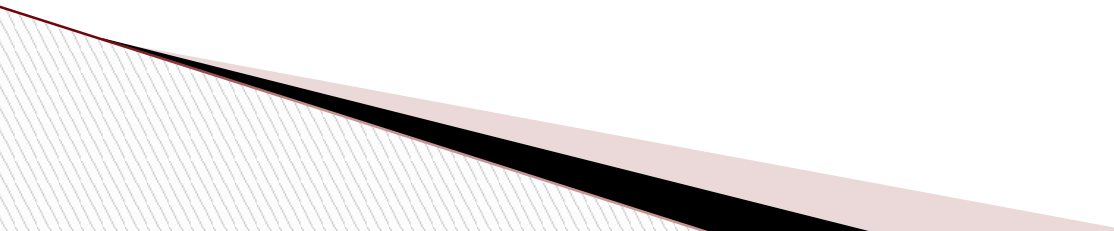
Group	# of sessions	# of attendees
Family/community members*	5	118
Teachers/staff	2	32
Administrators	1	13
Middle school students **	2	80
D97 grads/current OPRF students	3	12
	13	255

* = teachers also attended

** = additional students from afterschool homework support program did a session with their teacher using the same questions

Diversity of groups

▶ Adult groups

- Racial/ethnic diversity represented though two of the five family/community groups were nearly all white
 - Represented families with children K–8 and beyond
 - Represented families with children in regular and special education
 - Participants were connected to/engaged with the schools
- 

Diversity of groups – cont'd

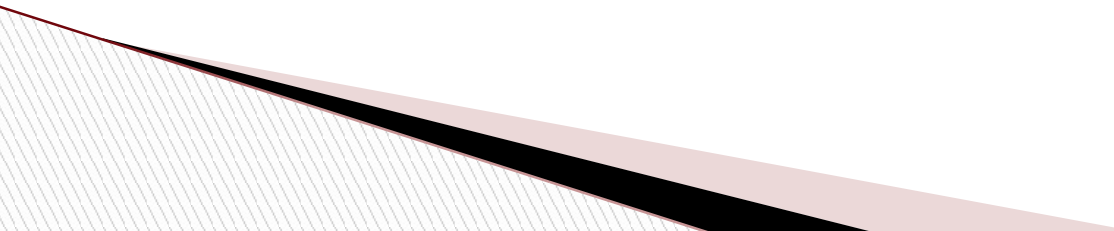
▶ Student groups

- Very diverse in terms of race/ethnicity
- Represented students who self-identified as being in gifted, regular and special education classes
- About even representation in terms of gender

Vision for District 97

- »» What stakeholders are looking for

Consensus around the big vision

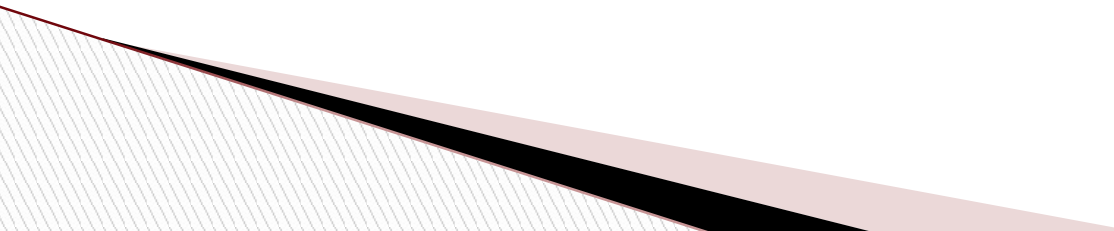
- ▶ Engaged/challenged students
 - ▶ Students feel happy, respected & excited
 - ▶ Equal opportunity for all students
 - ▶ Develop critical thinking skills
 - ▶ Students find their passion & develop a life long love of learning
 - ▶ Meet diverse needs of all students
 - ▶ Students develop tolerance, empathy & care for each other & the world
- 

Community conversations:

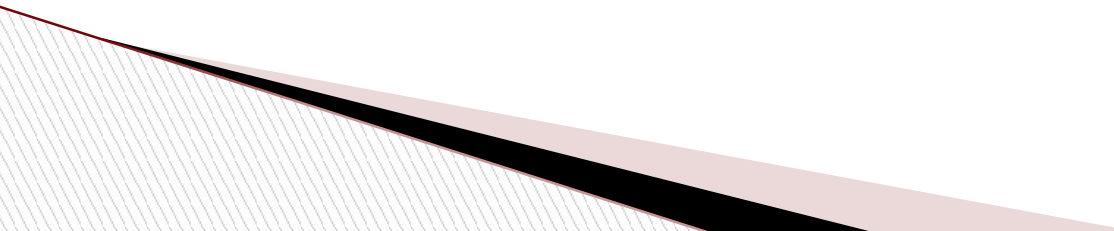
»» D97

Current Reality

District 97 should be student focused

- ▶ All decisions made at the district, school and classroom level should start with the question... “What’s best for students?”
 - ▶ Starting with what’s best for students means everyone needs to see their role as one that supports students and what happens in classrooms
- 

Focus on the whole child

- ▶ Teacher/student relationships are critical and need time & attention
 - ▶ Social emotional learning (SEL) is critical
 - As important as academic learning
 - As a support for academic learning
 - ▶ Extra-curriculars, the arts & other electives are not extras
 - ▶ Social workers and support for students is essential & should increase
- 

Support for teachers

- ▶ Resounding support for teachers
 - Many teachers are seen as doing a great job
 - Complete agreement that providing support for teachers is essential to success...of everything...the district & all students
- ▶ Investment in teachers is key
 - Professional development to implement changes, effectively use technology, ensure equity etc.

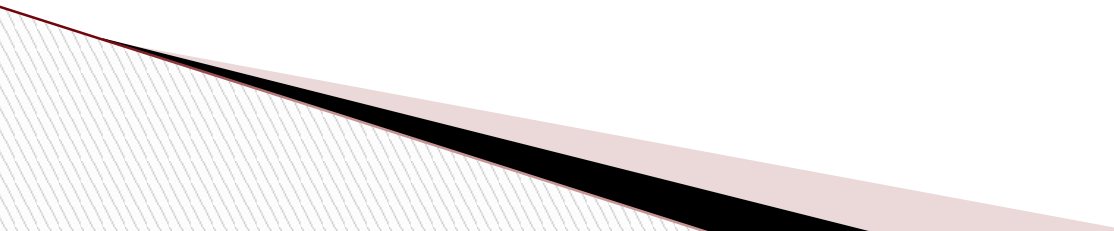
Support for teachers – cont'd

- ▶ D97 needs to support & use expertise of teachers
 - Provide time/opportunities for teachers to work together, collaborate & share strategies...within grade level, their school, across the district & with D200
 - Involve teachers from the beginning – in planning & decision-making to ensure efforts are actionable

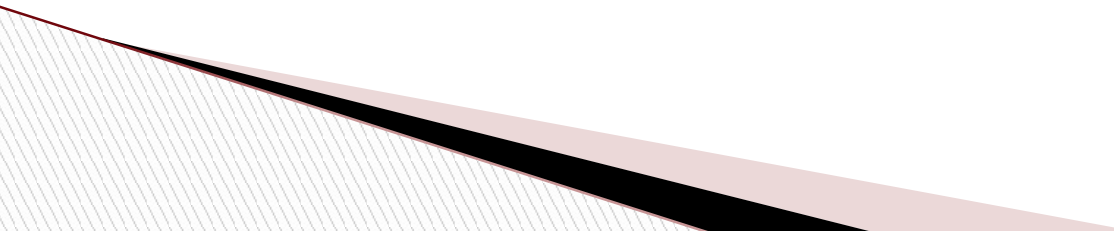
Equity

- ▶ Living in & supporting a diverse community is a high priority
- ▶ Students of color experience D97 differently
 - Achievement data
 - Discipline data
 - Activities that cost money are not available to all students
 - Gifted classes leave many students out especially students of color
- ▶ Some special education students also experience D97 differently
 - Students report feeling labeled, unsupported; made to feel they were “dumb”

Special education

- ▶ Concern that D97 lacks a consistent, research-based, system-wide approach to special education
 - ▶ Inclusion model (including co-teaching) works well in some places where occurring but not consistently implemented throughout the district
- 

Special education – cont'd

- ▶ Need for regular & special education professionals to collaborate – beneficial for all educators & students
 - ▶ Positive experiences with D97 special education shared by some families, from some elementary schools
- 

Middle school

- ▶ Major shift from elementary
 - Feels like a completely different district
 - Teams generally well received
 - Sense of community not as strong as in elementary school
 - Students divided more – by race, by special & regular education – adults need to do more to help
 - 90/10 – don't feel they have to do homework & then don't do as well on tests
- ▶ IB program raises questions
 - Need to implement fully/deeply
 - Should be a continuum – elementary & high school
 - Schedule only allows for one elective/elimination of block scheduling

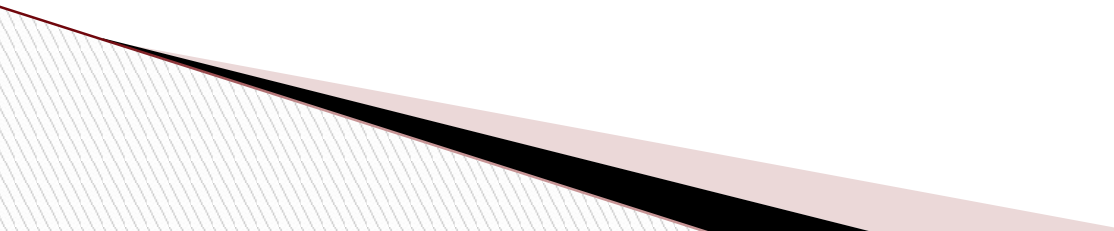
Middle school – cont'd

- ▶ Issues of bullying – students want more help from adults
 - Hallways & lunchroom can be difficult
 - Students who feel especially “other” are susceptible – e.g. special education students, students wrestling with identity issues etc.

Instructional issues

- ▶ Many positive comments about the education students receive – examples of programs identified include:
 - Spanish immersion program
 - Focus on the arts
- ▶ Concerns about standardized testing
 - Interferes with developmentally appropriate practice
 - Interferes with more creative, engaging practices – e.g. project based learning, science & social studies, critical thinking, deeper learning, electives etc.
- ▶ Growth mindset is positive overall but needs more thorough implementation
- ▶ Need time and training to support differentiation
- ▶ Homework – too early; too much

Communications

- ▶ Communications in all directions is key & needs more focus
 - District to schools, teachers, families, communities
 - Schools to teachers, families, communities, other schools
 - Teachers to families, communities, other teachers
 - ▶ Students need to better understand what is expected of them & where they stand academically
 - ▶ Strong communications builds understanding & trust
- 

Communications – cont'd

- ▶ Everyone feels better if they are respected, heard & what they say is valued – all want more forums for two-way communications
- ▶ Non-native speakers especially feel the need for more/better communications
- ▶ Report cards are a form of communications re: student progress
 - Families are very confused by them
 - Teachers feel they don't allow them to fully communicate student progress

Technology

- ▶ Technology is a helpful to learning & important for students to have access to
- ▶ Teachers need training & support for integration
- ▶ Need to clarify how it fits into the instructional plan K–12
 - Used too much, too soon
 - Middle schoolers typing papers on iPads
 - Some students want to go back to binders & planners
 - High schoolers use Chromebooks

Time

- ▶ Always need more time
 - To develop relationships & sense of community with students, families
 - For collaboration among teachers within & across schools
 - To slow down & implement change more thoroughly & thoughtfully
 - To allow students more breaks – e.g. lunch, movement time, between classes

Consistency & continuity

- ▶ Need for more consistency & continuity within D97
 - Great programs in some schools but not others
 - Need curriculum for district
 - Support for all to understand & implement
 - Allow flexibility so that teachers can draw from their creativity & knowledge to support their students
 - Need for better articulation & support at key transitions – e.g. between 5th & 6th grades & 8th & 9th grades
- ▶ Need for more communication and collaboration with D200

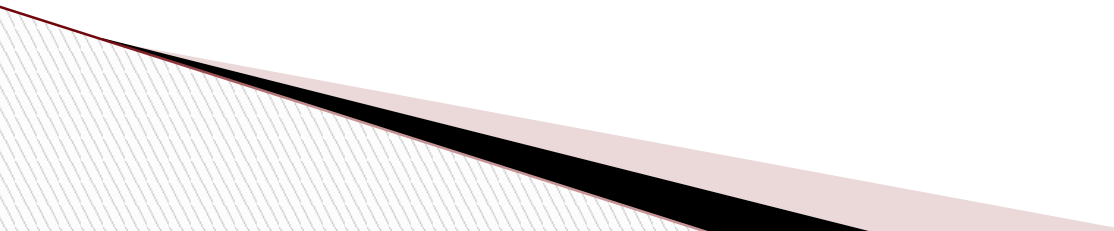
The Vision Plan

»» Guidance from stakeholders

Stakeholders would like you to...

- ▶ Set clear goals & expectations
 - Long-term with short-term, attainable steps
- ▶ Set priorities
 - Identify the few “must haves”
 - Recognize that not everything can be done at once

Stakeholders would like you to...

- ▶ Provide for thorough, thoughtful implementation
 - Opportunities for all stakeholders to understand
 - Training for teachers
 - Time for teachers to work together/share ideas
 - ▶ Build off what we know & do well
 - Don't reinvent the wheel
 - Use expertise in the district
 - Research-based & best practices
- 

Comments? Questions?



Thank you!

▶ Prepared by

Pat Maunsell & Eva Moon
M² Communications

