

Strategic Planning Process Executive Summary of Online Survey Responses



Missoula County Public Schools

Forward Thinking, High Achieving

MTSBA has been retained by the MCPS to facilitate its Strategic Planning Process. As part of the facilitation of this process, MTSBA administered an online survey soliciting information from parents, students, MCPS staff, community members and business owners. The purpose of this Executive Summary is to provide the Strategic Planning Committee and other interested parties with a synopsis of the information gleaned through the online survey. The online survey was intended to be one piece of information gathered during this process, in conjunction with the in-person meetings to discuss the District’s Mission, its long-term vision, the barriers or drivers that impact the success of the District, and its short-term priorities and strategies.

The following is an executive summary of the online survey conducted by the District and administered by MTSBA as part of the District’s Strategic Planning Process.

Levels of Participation

We had over 2700 responses to the online survey, which is a terrific response level for the purposes of planning for the future success of MCPS. Here is a breakdown of the demographic of those responding to the survey:

Status of Respondents	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Responses
Parents <i>(of current/former students of MCPS)</i>	42.35%	1,160
Students	30.41%	833
MCPS Certified Staff	15.12%	414
MCPS Classified Staff	5.48%	150
Community member <i>(no MCPS Children)</i>	5.33%	146
Business Owner	1.31%	36

Summary of Survey Results - Overview

On the survey, we asked participants to rate certain areas using a Likert Scale of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree or Neither Agree nor Disagree. The areas of inquiry included:

- The culture and climate of MCPS
- The engagement levels of parents of students
- The current culture with respect to the MCPS Administration and Board of Trustees
- The engagement and support levels of the Community

We also asked open-ended questions in an attempt to elicit additional information from the participants and identify common and repeated themes for the Strategic Planning Committee’s reference as they proceed through this process. The open questions asked were:

- If you could change one thing about MCPS, what would it be?
- What is one thing about MCPS you would not want to see changed?
- In your opinion, what are the top three priorities of MCPS?



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Summary of Input on culture and climate of MCPS

The following represents the overall percentage rating in each of the areas identified below:

Area of inquiry	Strongly Agree / Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
The school environment is one that supports students and student learning.	84%	10%	6%
The school environment is safe for our students both physically and emotionally.	70%	21%	9%
Our staff and students take pride in our schools.	80%	12%	8%
We have high expectations of all staff and students.	72%	19%	9%
Staff and students embrace and respect diversity.	70%	17%	13%

The following represents common themes regarding areas of continuous improvement/ concern from the individual comments in the survey relating to the culture and climate of MCPS:

- Overall, MCPS has a kind staff that generally embrace diversity but this is an area of continuous improvement.
- More attention to the area of individualized opportunities for students, life skills and pursuit of life-long learning.
- Efforts to prevent bullying and exclusion of students need to improve.
- More resources are needed to address issues that negatively impact student, e.g., vaping, drugs, behavioral/mental health issues, etc.
- The experience, policies, rules and regulations vary from building to building. Not all students are provided with equitable opportunities, particularly schools with lower social economic status.
- Safety continues to be a concern.
- Discipline/disruptive issues need to be addressed. Consider restorative justice approach to behavioral issues.
- Perceived divide between high achieving students and general student population with not enough attention to the needs, skill sets, interests, etc., of individual students.
- Need for increased awareness and welcoming of varied family and student populations.
- Need for continuous improvement in acceptance and respect for others.
- Need for continuous improvement in setting high standards for students and staff and accountability.

Summary of Input regarding parents of our students

The following represents the overall percentage ratings in each of the areas identified below:

Area of inquiry	Strongly Agree / Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Parents are actively involved in the education of their child(ren).	63%	21%	16%
Parents are made to feel welcome in our school.	76%	13%	11%
Parents know what is going on in our schools.	60%	25%	15%
Parents are aware of what is expected of their child(ren) in our school.	71%	17%	12%
Parents care about how their child(ren) perform in school.	82%	7%	11%

Strategic Planning Process Executive Summary of Online Survey Responses

The following represents common themes regarding areas of continuous improvement/ concern from the individual comments in the survey relating to engagement levels of parents of students:

- Need to enhance the outreach efforts to atypical parents. Some parents are heavily involved while others are not for differing reasons.
- Need for Improved communication from administrators and teachers to parents.
- Need for wrap-around support for at-risk students.
- Need for additional efforts/strategies to ensure parents feel welcome in school buildings and participation in their child’s education.
- Need for enhanced inclusion of parents from diverse backgrounds, e.g., refugees, American Indians, etc.

Summary of Input regarding the MCPS Administration and Board of Trustees

The following represents the overall percentage ratings in each of the areas identified below:

Area of inquiry	Strongly Agree / Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
MCPS administration and Board recognize employees for a job well done.	33%	22%	45%
MCPS administration and Board involve staff in decision making and problem solving	30%	22%	48%
MCPS administration, Board and staff communicate effectively.	36%	26%	38%
MCPS administration and Board hold themselves to the same high standards expected of others.	40%	17%	44%
MCPS administration and Board treat employees with respect and with professionalism	43%	13%	44%
MCPS administration and Board support individual student success.	46%	20%	34%
MCPS administration and Board are visionary and strategic in their approach to governing and operating our schools on a day-to-day basis.	34%	25%	41%

The following represents common themes regarding areas of continuous improvement/ concern from the individual comments in the survey relating to the MCPS Administration and Board of Trustees:

- Perceived disconnect between processes and procedures in the District, from one building to another, and across departments.
- Perceived disconnect between decision-making, those expected to implement, and between schools, staff and board.
- Enhanced need to address at-risk and/or diverse student needs.
- Communication is improved under new administration, but still needs attention.
- More visionary leadership and planning needed.
- Need for improved transparency and trust between District and community.
- Perception of “us v. them” is impacting needed progress.



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Summary of Input regarding the MCPS Community

The following represents the overall percentage ratings in each of the areas identified below:

Area of inquiry	Strongly Agree / Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
The District effectively communicates with our community on issues of significant, the positive things that are occurring in our schools, and in informing the community of our initiatives and priorities.	60%	23%	17%
Our community supports our schools and the direction of the District.	74%	10%	16%
Our community is actively engaged in our programs and services.	60%	18%	22%
Our community supports high expectations of students.	68%	12%	19%
Our community supports high expectations of staff.	73%	9%	19%
Our community supports high expectations of our Board of Trustees.	59%	10%	32%

The following represents common themes regarding areas of continuous improvement/ concern from the individual comments in the survey relating to the engagement and support levels of the community:

- Overall, there is strong community support, but improvements can be made with respect to:
 - » Establishing high educational standards for students and high expectations of staff;
 - » Enhanced community engagement, partnerships, community support and collaboration;
 - » Increased recognition of exceptional staff;
 - » Enhanced proactive and effective outreach to a diversified population; and
 - » Greater opportunities to celebrate successes and the great things that are happening in MCPS.

The following is a summary of the common themes found in response to the open-ended questions:

Open-ended question #1: If you could change one thing about MCPS, what would it be?

- Improve student opportunities/flexibilities and meet the individual needs and skill sets of each student.
- Reduce class sizes.
- Being able to openly voice concerns and opinions.
- Support for staff and accountability.
- Emphasis on the whole child and whole family, social-emotional learning.
- Greater community collaboration with organizations and businesses.
- Safety for students and staff.
- Allow staff the opportunities to advance, i.e., tap into the talent of MCPS staff.
- Ongoing facility needs.
- Diversity awareness and addressing underprivileged students/family needs.
- Greater equity of resources among the schools.
- High expectations for students and staff, academically, professionally and as members of the community.

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- More inclusive culture.
- Enhanced communication.
- Increase trust and transparency.
- Enhanced opportunities for parent involvement.
- Perception of being top administrative heavy.
- Consistency in district-wide systems.
- Review of current attendance/boundary policy.

Open-ended question #2: What is one thing about MCPS you would not want to see changed?

- Dedicated and caring staff, administration and Board with a focus on and commitment to students.
- Current programs, offerings and opportunities for students.
- Continued focus on improvement and adapting as a District, schools and individuals.
- Enhanced professional development opportunities for staff.
- Innovations of specialized programs.
- Neighborhood schools.
- The pride in our schools and our community.
- Commitment to the arts and music.
- Supports for at-risk students.
- Caring and supportive community.
- High standards and expectations of staff and students.
- Culture of inclusion and respecting diversity.
- Continued investment in physical plant and technology.
- Collaboration with organizations and businesses.
- Continued efforts to enhance communication across the board.
- Continued focus on safety and school climate.
- Recruitment of best educators.
- Commitment to providing the best possible education, opportunities and experiences for our students.

Open-ended question: #3 In your opinion, what are the top three priorities of MCPS?

- Student-Centered: Ensuring the District is meeting the needs and skillsets to allow each student to reach their potential, be innovative thinkers and promote a culture of lifelong learners.
- Collaborations and building relationships with parents, community and organizations.
- Safe environment for staff and students, physically, socially and emotionally.
- Creating a school culture that is positive, caring and inclusive.
- Physical plant maintenance and upgrades.
- Acceptance and respect for others' differences and opinions. Celebrate student backgrounds and experiences.
- Professional staff who are and feel valued and supported.
- Setting high standards/expectations across all spectrums (board, admin., staff, students, parents, community).
- Build trust and transparency.



