



Community Conversations About our Future – Envisioning the Schools of Our Future 2.0 Summary Report

Community members, parents, civic leaders, and faculty were invited to attend a series of community conversation events that were held throughout RSU 13 during the month of October 2019. These community events were structured as a follow up to a previous initiative that engaged the community-at-large in planning for the reorganization of district's community-based grade level schools, and necessary facility enhancements. This initial project was known as **Schools of Our Future**, and community input proved critical to the successful design and completion of these projects. With these structural and logistical needs now accomplished, RSU 13's attention turned once again to soliciting input from our community as the district begins an outward looking strategic planning process for how our schools must anticipate, plan, and continue to design and deliver educational opportunities that will serve to prepare all of our students for an ever-evolving future. This fresh phase of strategic planning is **Envisioning the Schools of Our Future 2.0**, and at each of the community conversation events, participants focused on three essential questions:

1. What is beyond school for our kids and are there pathways we should be building to help our students engage, learn in different ways, and become what they hope to become?
2. What can schools do to support the social and emotional growth of students, and why is it important.
3. What do you believe will be our greatest opportunities as a district community in the coming 3-5 years, and how might the community as a whole become more engaged in supporting students' learning?

In addition to our community conversation events, interested stakeholders who were unable to attend the events, were welcomed to offer input via a website survey. Through the community conversation events and on-line contributions, approximately 28-30 community members participated. Of these participants, 89% were residents of RSU 13, 46% identified as current parents of RSU 13 students, while others simply noted their sincere interest in learning more about district initiatives and supporting the communities' educational efforts.

RSU 13 wishes to express sincere gratitude to all who participated in these formative conversations. Participants' thoughts, ideas, and recommendations have been captured and organized on the summary pages that follow. Please know that this input is valued as a significant component in helping to inform RSU 13's on-going strategic planning process. **Thank You!**

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- 1 - **What is beyond school for our kids and are there pathways we should be building to help our students engage, learn in different ways, and become what they hope to become?**

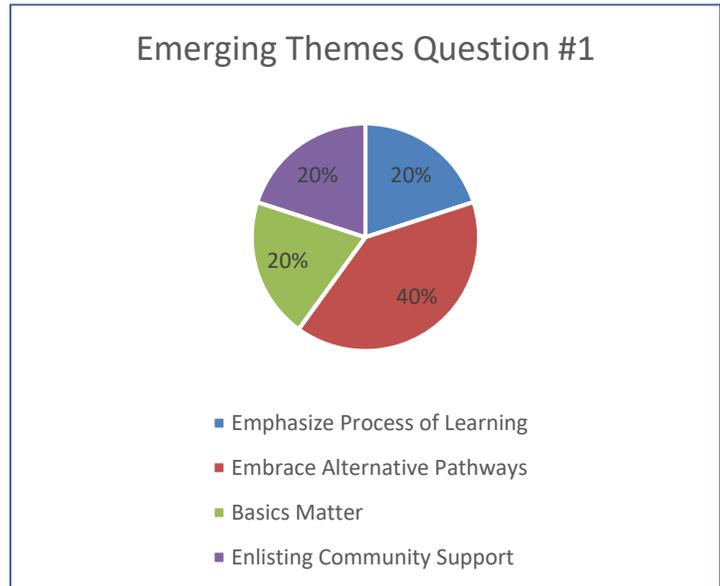
Emerging Themes:

Need to emphasize and teach the process of learning as a constant. **(Emphasize Process of Learning)**

- The skill sets connected with adaptability/flexibility/critical thinking - are becoming more important in an ever-changing world – preparing for a future that we can't imagine
- Students need to better understand their personal learning characteristics. How do I learn best? What are my learning strengths, challenges, and passions? How do I set the stage and take responsibility for my learning?
- Recognizing that each student has individual needs within learning – pathways and approaches to learning that respond to multiple needs
- Expanded understanding on how to realize future aspiration, beyond career – how to plan and prepare for this
- S.T.E.A.M vs. S.T.E.M
- Students would benefit from more student lead activities that focus on what each individual child's interests and strengths so that they can begin building a foundation for a future career they are passionate and well skilled at BEFORE they need to make decisions about college and long-term plans for their future.

Expanded and alternative pathways for learning: **(Embrace Alternative Pathways)**

- Experiential learning and project-based learning need to become more the norm
- Develop a more hands on approach to learning.
- Expeditions to places that provide insight into careers
- Continued support for differentiated pathways via the academy models
- We also need to better understand and implement pathways for learning that better integrate the disciplines. Students need to better appreciate how math, science, literacy, STEM, etc., are all connected



- I believe we need to increase our preparedness of them for roles in technology. Also, the ability for our teachers to support students with high potential or that are close and could achieve more
- Encourage the trade school, add additional programs there.
- Accurately characterizing challenges and problem-solving should be at the heart of preparing our kids for what is beyond school
- Expanded pathways need to connect our kids to multiple and extensive possibilities for their futures – building aspirations
- Opportunities to explore/be exposed to different ideas – possibilities
- Encourage foreign travel experiences, internships, early college, etc., and value them as ‘standards/credit worthy’ experiences.
- After school opportunities – particularly within the arts

Continue to build on the basics. **(Basics Matter)**

- Secure academic skills – including financial literacy and other life skills
- Insure strong support for the ‘middle kids’ though guidance services to explore possibilities and opportunities that might not be typically considered
- Bringing Home Economics-cooking, budgeting, check book/bank account managing, sewing back as an elective and bringing in business owners and electricians/plumbers/carpenters/auto workers to speak to students about their future opportunities
- Develop more regular education interventions for students not in special education and to prevent referrals to special education. The interventions or lack thereof are really very unsystematic in the RSU. Many of these would not require more resources just a reallocation of existing resources. One idea would be to develop alternative education programs at the elementary level.
- We need regular education interventions to support students learning differently - that go well beyond the capacity of Title 1.
- Continued support for Pre-K programs as setting the stage for success

Building pathways within community partnerships: **(Enlisting Community Support)**

- Pathway opportunities flow both ways; school to community/community to school
- Connecting students with outside opportunities that align with their passions – expand our role in helping students determine what those passions are
- More interaction with the arts community and waterfront and being a business owner downtown, or a farmer - more career shadowing and learning off campus. like the Apprentice Shop, CMCA, Farnsworth, Steel House and job shadowing at downtown businesses and farms.
- Create a community hub for sharing opportunities for school/community connections – linked to credible/actionable learning opportunities
- Marketing Manager to share the great things happening in our schools
- Look to improve coordination with towns

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#2 – What can schools do to support the social and emotional growth of students, and why is it important?

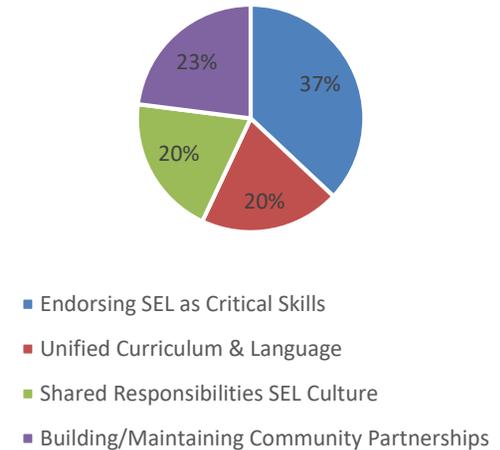
Emerging Themes:

Recognition that social emotional learning (SEL) involves a teachable skill set:

(Endorsing SEL as Critical Skills)

- SEL skills are not only co-equal in importance to academic learning but serve to promote & sustain academic success
- Discipline shift from 'blame and shame,' to more emphasis on personal responsibility within the community for communication, corrective action, and skill development
- Employ more qualified counselors at all levels
- Access to counselors and social workers to work through their problems
- Our RTI for behavioral difficulties really needs to be developed with a systematic response system.
- Systematic RTI behavioral intervention system. All schools should have an assessment system in place. More active teaching of social/emotional skills embedded in the day to day teaching.
- Emphasis on learning through modeling – practicing specific skills (intentional engaging, self-expression, self-advocacy, etc.)
- Actual classes and workshops addressing these issues in small groups; relating to people is key
- Directly links to essential skills for critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving
- Helping them develop coping and communication skills is essential. My daughter wrestles with anxiety, only in the school environment. It's hard for me to help because I don't see it. She's often sent to the nurse when that's not what is happening. I engaged the counselor once and she was very helpful. I just wonder if our standard procedure is catching this stuff. Are there books, online classes or activities that could develop confidence, communication and/or coping skills? If there is no time at school send them home I will do it!
- Learning to better 'read' the adults in your life – known and understand support offered – challenges realized

Emerging Themes Question #2



Building common language and curriculum-based approaches that extend Pre-K – 12. **(Unified Curriculum/Language)**

- Adopted and consistently utilized programs (Restorative Practice & Second Step) provide the foundations for theory, skills, & practice
- All students will benefit from improving & discovering a 'sense of self'
- Platforms encourage students to learn about their emotions and safely take risks in practicing & mastering skills – **empowering**.
- Learning how we better support our boys, both in terms of SEL and academic learning.
- Circles, community meetings, on site Social workers, quiet/meditation room. Important because everyone needs these skills to be a human in the world.
- How do cultural differences play a role in understanding 'self' - application for SEL?

Building and maintaining a district/community culture – practicing what we preach. **(Shared Responsibilities SEL Culture)**

- All about relationships that are based upon the awareness of classmates and active involvement – kids helping kids
- Provides tools for countering the negative impacts of social media
- Train teachers about the issues of our current social/emotional culture so as to support our children
- Need to identify measures of evidence that will help us know how SEL is changing our school community
- Understand that SEL strategies and techniques are not only for our students – we need to live the culture, not simply 'teach' the culture
- To be all inclusive, we need to find ways to train and involve all constituents, paraprofessionals & other support staff

Partnering with the community-at-large: **(Building/Maintaining Community Partnerships)**

- Maintaining active partnerships with Trekkers, The Landing Place, Head Start, others
- Welcoming volunteers into our school – so they will see and experience SEL in action
- Outreach to parents and care givers through school-based programs, sharing information, & prompting home-based activities
- Opportunities for sharing information about trauma, its impacts, and SELs role in providing support
- Opportunities to involve families – families need tools and language too
- Can we identify barriers to better parent involvement and create an action plan to make things better?
- Students need more time with a smaller ratio of students to adults in situations where there is free time to have open ended discussions and activities as a way to form more meaningful and personal connections with mentors in their community.

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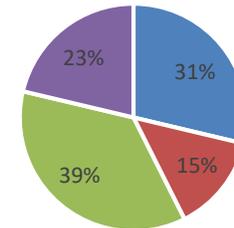
#3 – What do you believe will be our greatest opportunities as a district community in the coming 3-5 years, and how might the community as a whole become more engaged in supporting students’ learning?

Emerging Themes:

Engagement is a two-way street: **(Collaborative Community Engagement)**

- Community engagement with the schools with equal emphasis on school engagement with the community
- Communities feeling the ‘loss’ of a comprehensive high school & middle school – work towards strategies for ‘full ownership.’ How do we bring OMS & OHS to towns?
- Community/school connections benefit by being closely aligned with curriculum
- Bring the community to kids – outside of the classroom – maximize local resources & opportunities
- Bringing in volunteers from the community that are willing to work with students or share some of their knowledge of life
- Engagement opportunities build relationships; seniors, volunteers, business partnerships, internships, etc. serving to build a culture of support
- Learning how to give back to the community no matter what your age; contact community organizations and cultural organizations and individuals who might help you. I notice RSU13 is getting more culturally diverse. K-6 students seem open but then grades 7-12 it becomes harder. So please focus on that to get them ready for the world
- I believe giving our students opportunities to be involved with community organizations and local community members will show them what resources they have available to them. It will help them see they have help and support to reach out to and depend on when they need it and feel empowered to reach out and make changes in their situation and feel confident about making plans for their future and taking action towards reaching their goals.

Emerging Themes Question #3



- Collaborative Community Engagement
- Opportunities and Challenges
- Embracing the Non-Traditional
- Enhancing Communication

Consideration of Opportunities and Challenges (**Opportunities and Challenges**)

- We are poised to meet the needs of all students. We don't need more resources. We need to refocus our existing resources to meet the unique needs of all students.
- More funding for the arts! Our district is the art capital of the state our programs should reflect this! Music, Theater, Visual Arts
- MCST must be promoted as entirely credible – not 'second tier'
- Continuing to support MCST connection, a new physical high school that hopefully has new spaces and space for students to engage with their environment and relationship to learning better.

Realizing and acting upon the necessity to move beyond traditional educational structures & practices: (**Embracing the Non-Traditional**)

- Exploring new ways to educate our kids
- Help children learn interactively and understand how to leverage technology but manage screen-time and addiction to it. Help them learn coding, critical thinking and other important skills in the jobs of the future
- We need to be embracing the trades more
- Our students need to learn 'how to fail,' as a basis for future learning and success
- Marrying formal and informal education as both having value -how do we express/assign value for informal learning?
- Global warming and the science of climate change needs to come to the forefront of learning
- Keeping pace with an ever-changing technology landscape – how do we best prepare our students for the 'unknowable?'
- Emphasize technology supported logic-based learning
- Funding for the arts! Our district is the art capital of the state our programs should reflect this! Music, Theater, Visual Arts
- Extending school hours to 6pm afterschool program / care and developing a family center and site that can serve families with education, food, social work into the early evening hours.

Building capacity & effectiveness with our communication tools: (**Enhancing Communication**)

- Networking within the community-at-large, building broad data-base & keeping connections strong
- Using networking to capture and welcome new ideas – not just exchange information
- Realize that RSU 13 has some 'bragging rights,' – share the successes
- I want to add I am most impressed with the teachers and principals and our superintendent! You are the reason why RSU13 are doing so well! And I thank you for it.



Keep the Momentum Going in RSU 13—

Tuesday, November 5, 2019 8:51 AM

Last night [Wednesday, October 30] I attended one of the community conversations on Envisioning the RSU 13 Schools of our Future. What a refreshing and engaging event it was. Superintendent John McDonald and Curriculum Director Steffany Tribou shared the deep collaborative work between teachers, school board, administrators and community to bring us a new strategic approach for 21st century education, education to reach every child, developing the whole child emotionally, socially and academically.

Collaboration is a key word. This team has worked together developing a coherent and unified curriculum process for learning. They have seen what needs to be done and are doing it, helping children learn and grow confident in their knowledge, while also giving teachers what they need to build on skills for each developmental age throughout the school's system.

Another key is community participation. We were asked to contribute ideas, feedback and participation in helping them to consider how the community as a whole might become more engaged in supporting students' learning. What can schools do to support the social and emotional growth of students, and why is it important?

Academic development is fundamental and so is emotional and social development. Congrats on all fronts.

And wow, I got to see the new structural improvements on the school campus at Oceanside High School. Impressive! There's an open house Wednesday, November 6, from 5 to 7 p.m. I hope everyone comes to see the work and feel the pride in all the hard work of this deeply committed and talented group of people. Above all, let's celebrate our children. They are the ones who really deserve our fullest attention. Let's show up for them, listen to their successes and give them what they need more of — our respect, honoring the whole child, every child. Everyone can learn and grow, especially if we do it together. Thank you all at RSU 13 for showing us how it can be done. Now it's up to all of us to keep the momentum going. See you at the Oceanside, 400 Broadway, Rockland, Open House November 6, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Skye Hirst, Rockland