



Executive Summary

As a result of the small group work activity
Community Engagement Session #5 • Nov. 9, 2022

About 205 people participated in the fifth Unite U-46 community engagement session on Nov. 9, 2022. Thirty-one (31) individuals signed in at the in-person session at the U-46 Welcome Center, and 174 people logged in for the virtual session online.

The community chairs of Unite U-46 presented the draft recommendations for the Board of Education for participants to review and finalize.

Following the presentation, participants worked in 11 small groups virtually and in-person to complete the tasks discussed below. To view the presentation and verbatim responses, visit UniteU46.org. Following is a summary of the responses from the groups.

Task #1: Did We Get It Right? - Help Us Cross The Finish Line!

In tonight's presentation, you were presented with the recommendations developed from community suggestions at previous Unite U-46 community engagement sessions and the community survey. We realize there are very few things in life that can be labeled "perfect" and that is also true for any final solution to move our schools forward. Tonight, we have one question for you. Did we get it right? Does the plan presented fulfill the charge provided to us by the Board of Education?

- ☐ *Yes! This is a great plan that will move U-46 schools forward.*
- ☐ *Almost got it, but here are a couple of ideas to strengthen the recommendations:*

All but one workgroup recommended ideas to strengthen the recommendations. The suggestions were primarily grouped into these categories:

- Preschool
- Middle school
- Timeline for implementation and student transition
- Boundary changes
- Safety and security
- Finances

Five groups suggested including clarification on increasing preschool opportunities within the elementary schools. Participants recommended highlighting that the preschool program will continue to need specialized resources, learning environments and staffing even when it is housed within the elementary schools. Two groups specifically asked for additional detail on where the preschool classrooms will be located, while two other groups focused on addressing the need for a preschool schedule and transportation to increase opportunities for children with working parents or caregivers.

Four groups commented on the topic of middle school, but the suggestions were varied. Two groups noted that there is still a need to address middle school facilities. Two groups were

concerned about transitioning sixth graders to middle school and asked about the benefits and drawbacks of these students attending middle school.

Three groups recommended including a timeline for implementing the recommendations and what the transition process will look like.

Two groups thought there was a need for additional details about boundary changes, while two others asked for clarification on the cost breakdown of the recommendations. Two groups also mentioned increasing security at the schools.

Task #2: Trust and Transparency

Throughout the Unite U-46 process, we have gained unique insight into the operation of our schools. As we move forward, how can our school district continue to increase trust and transparency and enhance open, honest communication?

Five groups provided suggestions tied to continued community outreach and communication. Two groups were concerned about how to best inform and involve those who do not have children in school. Two groups suggested using direct mail, and two recommended a door-to-door effort. Other suggestions included reaching out to neighborhood associations groups, continued online surveys and ongoing email and text messaging. One group stated, "Keep parents informed - over-communication is better than nothing or not enough."

If the Board of Education moves forward with the Unite U-46 recommendations, participants recommended developing tailored communication pieces for parents, non-parents and community members. In addition, they highlighted the importance of being clear that the tax rate will not increase.

The workgroups also recommended increasing community engagement and transparency about boundary changes and what will happen to the school buildings and sites when buildings are retired, renovated or rebuilt. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of building principals having a strong understanding of the plan.

Three groups recommended continuing community meetings, with one group suggesting moving the meetings into the community.

Three groups encouraged continued, ongoing communication about the District's financial position and the financial details of the recommendations.

Consensus Points

- To strengthen the Unite U-46 recommendations, additional clarification about increasing preschool opportunities within the elementary schools and a timeline for the implementation and student transitions should be added.
- U-46 should continue community outreach and communication initiatives. There should be an ongoing effort to include and involve as many District stakeholders as possible.
- If the Board of Education moves forward with the Unite U-46 recommendations, tailored communication should be developed for different segments of the community. These communications should clearly indicate that the tax rate will not change.

**For a complete listing of all responses,
see the CES #5 Verbatim Response Document on the website, UniteU46.org**