

Community Conversation: Summary District Climate Community Discussions

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on behalf
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Overview of Community Discussion

Facilitators: Leila Richey Nuland, Tony Mastrorio and Stephan Knobloch from *K12 Insight*, a research and communications firm located in Herndon, Virginia

Purpose: Gather candid feedback from parents and community members about the state of the educational climate across Katy ISD and use feedback to develop a customized survey based on the discussions.

Format: Informal

- Asked questions designed to explore perspectives on educational climate
- Maintained an open and constructive dialogue
- Everyone had an opportunity to participate
- Facilitators moved the conversation forward so that all topics were covered within the 2-hour period
- All responses are confidential
- Information will be used to develop the Katy ISD District Climate Survey

Participant Information

K12 *Insight* facilitated eight two-hour conversations, with a total of 166 community members participating.

56,000 registered voters received a direct mailer invite. Emails and news releases were also disseminated to notify community members.

The participant population represented the diversity within Katy ISD.

Participants included:

- Parents of current Katy ISD students
- Parents of former Katy ISD students
- Retired community members who are taxpayers
- Current Katy ISD employees
- Former Katy ISD employees

Summary

Strengths

- District's reputation for academic excellence
- Program quality

Weaknesses

- District communication efforts
- Inequities across schools
- Need for community engagement
- Need for a strategic plan

District's Reputation for Academic Excellence and Program Quality

- A majority of participants are proud of Katy ISD and feel the district has a reputation for academic excellence.
 - Gifted and Talented programs
 - Language Immersion Programs
- Many participants feel Katy ISD employs high-quality instructional staff and are satisfied with the interactions they have had with campus instructional staff.

Inequities in School District

- How can Katy ISD ensure academic excellence for all in an increasingly diverse community?
- Concerns about variation in programs across campuses
 - Discrepancies between special education programs across Katy ISD schools
 - Lack of availability of Language Immersion programs at all campuses
- Need for district to communicate individual campus needs
 - If one school does not have an active PTA, non-parent community may be able to provide fundraising assistance and other resources
- If inequities are not addressed, parent participants feel attendance boundary modification is not fair.

District Communication

- Participants voiced their appreciation to the district and Board for convening the Community Conversations.
- Overall sense that parent community members are “not heard.”
- Community members appreciated the direct mailer and suggested a need for continued outreach through direct mail.
- Skepticism about purpose of Community Conversations.

District Communication (Continued)

- Timeliness
- Presenting balanced viewpoints
- Engaging community in strategic planning

Community and Parent Engagement

- Create opportunities to raise community awareness about district dilemmas
- Parents of former Katy ISD students feel they are forgotten after their child graduates.
- Improve alumni outreach efforts
- District leadership should be more visible in the community.

Need a Strategic Plan

- Participants did not feel the True North goals were measurable goals; they would like to see an explicit plan that includes key performance indicators.
- Many referred to the current goals as “too high level.”
- Community members need to understand the district strategic plan in order to make informed decisions about bond referendums.

Next Steps and Recommendations

- Disseminate a Community Survey to determine if the Community Conversations capture the current perspective of the larger Katy ISD population.
- Work with K12 *Insight* to develop a strategic plan for the 2015-2016 school year.
- Incorporate *Let's Talk!* on Katy ISD website