

Lumpkin County School System

Strategic Improvement Planning - Public Engagement *Report*



Presented January 17-18, 2017

Contents:

- **Report Summary**

Addendum

- Community Engagement Meeting Notes
- Online Survey Results

Lumpkin County School System

Community Engagement Session

Community Focus Group – November 1, 2016

Online Survey – November 2-18, 2016

Prepared by: Donna Davis
Georgia School Boards Association

To assist the Strategic Planning Team with their work, the Lumpkin County School System engaged its community in a process to assess the thoughts, feelings and perceptions that stakeholders hold regarding the district – before the plan was developed. The engagement initiative, designed and implemented by the Georgia School Boards Association, included a community focus group exercise and an online survey. A genuine effort was made to make the process as inclusive and transparent as possible.

Participants of the community focus group and the online survey responded to the following questions:

1. How is Lumpkin County Schools' performance for each of the following:
 - a. Being responsive to the community
 - b. Showing willingness to engage the community
 - c. Being willing to change the culture to improve productivity?
2. What is Lumpkin County DOING WELL in each of the following categories?
 - a. Teaching and Learning (providing a challenging curriculum, etc.)
 - b. Climate and Culture (safe, caring environment, partnership with families, community members and school staff, etc.)
 - c. Personnel and Programs (quality teachers and staff, quality programs in place, appropriate learning environments for the 21st century, etc.)
 - d. Resources to support students and staff (technology, facilities, safe, secure and inviting campuses, time, etc.)
3. What does Lumpkin County Schools need to IMPROVE UPON in each of the following categories?
 - a. Teaching and Learning (providing a challenging curriculum, need for differentiated instruction, better special education, ELL or gifted services, etc.)
 - b. Climate and Culture (safe, caring environment, partnership with families, community members and school staff, etc.)
 - c. Personnel and Programs (quality teachers and staff, quality programs in place, appropriate learning environments for the 21st century, etc.)
 - d. Resources to support students and staff (technology, facilities, safe, secure and inviting campuses, time, etc.)
4. What do you like about Lumpkin County Schools' current methods of communication?
What do you not like about the current methods of communication?

The intention of this report is to provide a collection of the best thinking of school and community members regarding the five questions presented. The information gathered is qualitative and seeks to focus attention on those areas that generated the most energy. Members of the strategic planning team will use the input of the community to assist them in developing a plan to move the district forward.

The Response

About 48 staff, district leaders, parents, community members, and business leaders participated in the community focus group exercise. There were 243 responses to the online survey. The largest percentage of respondents to the online survey identified themselves as parent/guardians (46.6%). The second largest group of participants identified as staff members with no students currently in LCS (17.5%), and the third largest were staff members with current LCS students (14.1%).

NOTE: *BLUE TEXT REPRESENTS THE ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS.*
BLACK TEXT REPRESENTS THE FOCUS GROUP RESULTS.

Question 1:

When asked, *“How is Lumpkin County Schools’ performance for each of the following?”*

- a. *Being responsive to the community*
- b. *Showing willingness to engage the community*
- c. *Being willing to change the culture to improve productivity”* the following represents the areas of greatest agreement among survey respondents and community focus group participants:
 - 1.a. **67.8% rated Community Responsiveness as “Excellent” or “Good.”** 30.2% rated Community Responsiveness as “Needs Improvement” or “Poor.”
 - 1.b. **68.7% rated Community Engagement as “Excellent” or “Good.”** 29.6% rated Community Engagement as “Needs Improvement” or “Poor.”
 - 1.c. **49.2% rated Willingness to Change Culture as “Excellent” or “Good.”** 45.5% rated Willingness to Change Culture as “Needs Improvement” or “Poor.”
 - 1.a. Positive: Interested in seeing the outcome of this meeting; Lots of community service provided by school; Family Connection bridges the gap well. More responsive in E.S., less as kids grow into M.S. & H.S.
 - 1.a. Negative: Perceptions of students that culture does not hear complaints.
 - 1.b. Positive: Reaches out to community groups and stakeholders - this event is a positive move. Career Days; Partners in Education
 - 1.b. Negative: CTAE focus on employability – not enough business support (limited resources), need connection with the hospital
 - 1.c. Positive: If you see possible positive outcomes, more willing. Dr. Brown’s leadership will increase productivity/image of school; willingness to change/step outside status quo
 - 1.c. Negative: Need a process for staff input at school and system level. Culture change—staff input (using technology to increase productivity specific to community relations)

Question 2: **Respondents were allowed to choose one or more choices.*

When asked, “What is Lumpkin County **DOING WELL** in each of the following categories?

- a. *Teaching and Learning (providing a challenging curriculum, etc.)*
- b. *Climate and Culture (safe, caring environment, partnership with families, community members and school staff, etc.)*
- c. *Personnel and Programs (quality teachers and staff, quality programs in place, appropriate learning environments for the 21st century, etc.)*
- d. *Resources to support students and staff (technology, facilities, safe, secure and inviting campuses, time, etc.),”* the following represents the areas of greatest agreement among stakeholders:

- 2.a. **In response to what the system is doing well in Teaching and Learning**, 55.2% answered Providing a Challenging Curriculum; 38.9% answered Special Education Services, 38.5% answered Gifted Education Services and 31.7 answered Personalized Instruction.
- 2.b. **In response to what the system is doing well in Climate and Culture**, 72.2% answered Safe, Caring Environment, 43.5 answered Partnership with School Staff, 38.4% answered Partnership with Families and 34.7% answered the partnership with Community Members.
- 2.c. **In response to what the system is doing well in Personnel and Programs**, 73.6% answered Quality Teachers and Staff, 41% answered Quality Programs in Place, and 41% answered Appropriate Learning Environments for the 21st Century.
- 2.d. **In response to what the system is doing well in Providing Resources to support students and staff**, 61.3% answered Provide Safe, Secure and Inviting Campus, 54.5% answered the Facilities, 44.6% answered Technology and 31.5% answered Time.
- 2.a. Extracurricular opportunities available to extend academics - Many and varied offerings; The needs of students are being met academically; Teachers are trained in teaching all types of learners (at the same time).
- 2.b. There is a good working environment, dedicated teachers; Mentorships available at the high school level; administrators and system personnel are proactive in dealing with difficult behavior. Also, perception that students have a safe place to be (happy, safety plans, a clean learning environment, check-in system and cameras in all buildings.)
- 2.c. CTAE connects with businesses, schools, real-world exposure and opportunities to expand; Fine Arts programs excel--full time fine arts teachers needed at each school; Technology is useful, up-to-date and apps connect to standards; Good quality staff/personnel, good teacher retention and professional development opportunities.
- 2.d. Clean, well-maintained and attractive facilities; Guidance counselors and mentors available; access to technology provided; Parents willing to volunteer to meet needs; SRO, door keypads and security cameras provide safety. There is financial and emotional outreach to needy families.

Question 3: **Respondents were allowed to choose one or more choices.*

When asked, “What does Lumpkin County Schools need to **IMPROVE UPON** in each of the following categories?

Teaching and Learning (providing a challenging curriculum, need for differentiated instruction, better special education, English Language Learner (ELL) or gifted services, etc.)

- a. *Climate and Culture (safe, caring environment, partnership with families, community members and school staff, etc.)*
- b. *Personnel and Programs (quality teachers and staff, quality programs in place, appropriate learning environments for the 21st century, etc.)*

c. *Resources to support students and staff (technology, facilities, safe, secure and inviting campuses, time, etc.),*” the following represents the areas of greatest agreement among survey respondents and community focus group participants:

- 3.a. **In response to** what the system needs to improve in **Teaching and Learning**, 54% answered the Need for Personalized Instruction; 34.1% answered Provide a Challenging Curriculum, and 23.7% answered Gifted Education Services.
- 3.b. **In response to** what the system needs to improve in **Climate and Culture**, 52.4% answered Partnership with Families, 41.8% answered Partnership with Community Members and 39.7% answered the Partnership with School Staff.
- 3.c. **In response to** what the system needs to improve in **Personnel and Programs**, 47% answered Appropriate Learning Environments for the 21st Century, 45.9% answered the Quality of Programs in Place and 37.2% answered Quality of Teachers and Staff.
- 3.d. **In response to** what the system needs to improve in **Providing Resources to support students and staff**, 51.5% answered the Use of Funding, 45.6% answered Technology and 31.4% answered the Facilities.
- 3.a. There is a need for a SAT prep course; a need for more AP classes and scheduling options; a need for more language offerings and choices as well as offered to younger students. Also, there is a need for more help for Early Intervention Program (EIP) students and the Response to Intervention (RTI) process
- 3.b. The administration doesn't preserve the graduation plan they force the students to commit to. There is a feeling of administration and teachers that lack understanding of students and students feel belittled by some teachers - an inconsistency in communication/message from administration to the classroom.
- 3.c. Concern that the HS Counseling staff is not trustworthy; a concern with the EIP model that students are under-served. There is not enough support for Special Ed with large caseloads and class sizes and length of RTI process. There is a lack of communication with special needs (accidents, illnesses) - students need advocates.
- 3.d. There is a need to update older facilities/safe concern that middle school has too many buildings; there is a need of universal screeners for testing (Iowa, CoGAT). Special Ed staff is stretched too thin and should increase to meet the demand of students. They need additional resources/people to serve all students. Regular Ed teachers need more training for working with Special Ed students and EIP needs extra support. Teachers need basic supplies and more substitute teachers are needed.

Question 4:

When asked, “What do you like about Lumpkin County Schools’ current methods of communication? And, What do you not like about the current methods of communication?” the following represents the areas of greatest agreement among survey focus group participants:

- 4.a. (Like) **In response to** what do you like about the system’s current communication methods, most liked the auto calls/One Call Now; the emails, texts and newsletters as well as the Remind me app and PowerSchool were also very appreciated. Several liked the Web and Facebook presence and in general the multiple ways the system communicates.
- 4.b. (Dislike) **In response to** what do you not like about the system’s current communication methods, some feel the new website is not as user-friendly; hard to find info. Some respondents feel there is an overuse of the callout/robo calls--at least want the use reviewed so only appropriate messages going out. Many prefer the newsletters/folders to go out on Monday for the week rather than on Wednesday when week is halfway through. Be timely with the information. A few felt that the communication could be more personal and friendly.

- 4.a. (Like) Large number like the One Call Now Robo calls, the Remind 101 texts, and the PowerSchool. Other answers included newsletters, school-based apps and website and Facebook as well as emails.
- 4.b. (Dislike) The group agreed with the online survey participants that the school website navigation is difficult and not user friendly. Communication is lacking when there are schedule changes (particularly AP courses cancelled, etc.). Some question the subject of auto/Robocalls and feel they should be used for more academic-based information. Would like communications for lunch charge and a class for parents to learn English. Would like better communication process of getting info to parents without Internet access. (Advertise community events in the paper. Dahlonga Nugget is underutilized.) There is a feeling that decisions are made without involving those they affect - getting info "after the fact" and that items from leadership meetings are not communicated accurately.

Question 5:

Additional Issues/Items mentioned in online survey for potential consideration

- Concern that school sports is valued over education/curriculum
- Traffic flow needs should be planned out for long-term
- Need more consistency with discipline and programs system-wide.
- Request in the group discussions for a countywide shared Google drive for teachers to share resources.