

## Comprehensive Planning Committee SAC Feedback Summary - March 2026

**937 parents and some staff participated in sessions with their SAC, PTO, or other district led committees or specialized focus groups.**

**Question 1: As we move forward in developing an approach to school consolidation, what are some ways to keep our community informed?**

### 1. Centralized, Transparent Information Hub

- Create a single, easy-to-find website or dashboard with:
    - Timelines, decisions, criteria, and updates
    - Meeting notes, recordings, and data
    - FAQs and “myth-busting” sections
  - Keep it continuously updated with both current and historical information
  - Include clear visuals, simple summaries, and access to raw data
- 

### 2. Clear, Concise, and Consistent Communication

- Send short, easy-to-read emails with bullet points and key takeaways
  - Highlight what’s new and avoid overly long or repetitive messages
  - Clearly explain:
    - The “*why*” behind decisions
    - Criteria, trade-offs, and impacts
  - Use plain language (avoid jargon) and consistent messaging across all channels
- 

### 3. Multi-Channel Communication Approach

Use a wide range of platforms to reach different audiences:

- Email (preferred, especially from school principals)
- Text messages / robocalls for alerts
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- District and school newsletters
- Local media (newspapers, community bulletins)
- Flyers, mailers, and signage with QR codes

- Videos, podcasts, and short summaries
- 

#### 4. School-Based and Trusted Messengers

- Share information through principals, teachers, and school staff (higher trust and engagement)
  - Include updates in school newsletters and PTO communications
  - Ensure consistent messaging between district and schools
- 

#### 5. Two-Way Engagement & Community Input

- Provide meaningful opportunities for feedback:
    - Town halls, listening sessions, and open houses
    - Small-group discussions and focus groups
    - Surveys and online forms
  - Allow questions in advance and maintain a living FAQ
  - Show how community input is used in decisions
- 

#### 6. In-Person Outreach & Community Presence

- Attend existing events (PTO meetings, school events, community fairs)
  - Host meetings at individual schools and community locations
  - “Meet people where they are” (libraries, neighborhoods, mobile home parks, etc.)
  - Provide childcare, food, and accessible scheduling
- 

#### 7. Accessibility & Inclusivity

- Provide communication in multiple languages
- Go beyond translation with in-person multilingual support
- Reach:
  - Non-English speakers
  - Families without internet access
  - Community members without school-aged children
- Include charter school families and broader taxpayers

---

## 8. Regular, Predictable Updates

- Share updates on a consistent schedule (even if no major changes)
  - Clearly communicate timelines and next steps
  - Avoid surprises by over-communicating key milestones
- 

## 9. Transparency with Data & Decision-Making

- Share:
    - Enrollment trends, financial data, and facility usage
    - Decision criteria and evaluation metrics
  - Explain trade-offs, risks, and benefits
  - Provide evidence and comparisons (e.g., other districts)
- 

## 10. Build Trust Through Transparency & Authenticity

- Be honest, proactive, and direct
  - Address rumors and misinformation quickly
  - Demonstrate that feedback is genuinely considered
  - Maintain a positive but realistic tone
- 

## 11. Tailored & Targeted Outreach

- Customize communication for different groups:
    - Families vs. general community
    - Rural vs. urban populations
    - Underrepresented groups
  - Use community partners and local organizations to extend reach
- 

## Key Takeaways

- Centralize information, simplify messaging, and communicate often
- Use multiple platforms—but keep messaging consistent

- Prioritize trust through transparency and real engagement
- Meet people where they are—both physically and digitally

**Question 2: As we move forward in developing an approach to school consolidation, what would a successful process include?**

1. Clear, Transparent, and Trust-Building Process

- Radical transparency at every stage:
    - Clear criteria, decision-making process, and timelines published early
    - Open access to accurate, disaggregated, and regularly updated data
  - Build trust intentionally:
    - Show how community input is actually used
    - Address skepticism that decisions are predetermined
    - Be transparent about which schools are NOT being considered
  - Define the process itself (not just meetings):
    - What happens before, during, and after input
    - What decisions stakeholders influence vs. what they don't
  - Consistent communication:
    - Regular updates, clear messaging, and opportunities for Q&A
    - Share decisions first with impacted communities
- 

2. Clear, Objective, and Vetted Criteria

- Establish well-defined, publicly understood criteria before decisions:
  - Enrollment trends (not just current utilization)
  - Financial sustainability
  - Building condition and infrastructure
  - Geography, boundaries, and feeder patterns
  - Community impact and school value
- Incorporate both:
  - Quantitative data (enrollment, costs, projections)
  - Qualitative data (programming, culture, partnerships, community role)
- Include equity and community value explicitly in criteria
- Allow community feedback on criteria (before decisions)
- Once criteria are finalized:
  - Apply them consistently and transparently
  - Do not re-open decisions to opinion-based feedback

---

### 3. Strong Equity Focus and Protection for Vulnerable Communities

- Require a formal Equity Impact Assessment before final decisions
- Ensure consolidation does NOT:
  - Disproportionately impact Title I or marginalized communities
  - Reinforce segregation driven by school choice patterns
- Provide:
  - Proactive, differentiated outreach to underrepresented families
  - Language access and removal of participation barriers
- Use disaggregated data throughout the process, not just at the end
- Prioritize:
  - Students with IEPs, multilingual learners, and specialized program needs
  - Rural and geographically isolated communities
- Recognize unequal ability to adapt to change (transportation, time, resources)

---

### 4. Student-Centered Decision Making (Not Just Financial)

- Clearly center decisions on student outcomes and experience, not just cost savings
- Define what “success” looks like for students:
  - Academic quality
  - Access to programs
  - Belonging and mental health
- Balance tradeoffs transparently:
  - Neighborhood schools vs. school choice
  - Efficiency vs. community identity
- Ensure:
  - Reasonable class sizes
  - Continued access to valued programs (e.g., bilingual, STEM, IB)
- Study why families are leaving the district (charter, homeschool, online)

---

### 5. Comprehensive Financial and Impact Analysis

- Provide honest, full financial picture, including:
  - Cost savings vs. new costs (transportation, renovations, staffing)

- Long-term vs. short-term impacts
  - Conduct comprehensive impact studies:
    - Transportation (costs, safety, time)
    - Community and economic impacts (housing, enrollment loss)
    - Facility reuse and ongoing costs of vacant buildings
  - Explore alternatives before consolidation:
    - Boundary changes
    - Program shifts
    - Enrollment caps or policy adjustments
- 

## 6. Transportation, Boundaries, and Accessibility Planning

- Conduct a detailed transportation study BEFORE decisions, including:
    - Costs, routes, commute times, and safety (especially major roads & rural areas)
  - Consider:
    - Walkability and bikeability
    - Traffic impacts and family logistics
  - Align:
    - Boundaries, feeder systems, and transportation plans
  - Ensure:
    - Students are not overburdened by long or unsafe commutes
    - Cohorts and communities can stay together where possible
- 

## 7. Clear Timeline and Phased, Predictable Implementation

- Publish a detailed, realistic timeline, including:
  - Criteria development → feedback → decision → implementation
  - Staffing timelines (including RIFs if applicable)
  - Transition milestones
- Key expectations:
  - Adequate time (ideally ~1 year) between decision and implementation
  - Decisions aligned with key milestones (e.g., after October count, before school choice deadlines)
- Consider:
  - Phased transitions vs. all-at-once implementation (with rationale)
- Ensure timelines account for greater needs of vulnerable populations

---

## 8. Detailed Transition and Implementation Planning (Before Announcements)

- Do not announce closures without a full transition plan, including:
    - Student placement and feeder patterns
    - Transportation plans
    - School of Choice impacts
    - Specialized program continuity
  - Maintain:
    - Student cohorts and community connections where possible
  - Provide:
    - Mental health supports for students and staff
    - Orientation, transition events, and community-building opportunities
- 

## 9. Staff Support, Clarity, and Inclusion

- Provide transparent HR processes:
    - Staff placement, transfers, and protections
  - Involve teachers and staff meaningfully:
    - Recognize their expertise and role in student success
  - Support staff through:
    - Clear communication
    - Mental health resources
    - Team-building for new school configurations
  - Aim to:
    - Minimize disruption
    - Retain high-quality educators
- 

## 10. School Identity, Culture, and Community Integration

- Define clearly what “consolidation” means:
  - Merger vs. closure vs. absorption
- Plan intentionally for:
  - New school identity (name, mascot, culture)
  - Integration of communities (not one absorbed into another)
- Create:
  - Shared vision and belonging in merged schools

- Avoid:
    - Pitting schools against each other
  - Recognize schools as community hubs, especially in rural areas
- 

## 11. Building Use and Long-Term Planning

- Provide clear plans for vacated buildings BEFORE decisions
  - Consider:
    - Community input on reuse
    - Equity impacts of redevelopment (avoid disinvestment in low-income areas)
  - Align with:
    - City planning and long-term demographic trends
  - Maintain flexibility for:
    - Future population growth and reopening needs
- 

## 12. Strong Leadership and Decisive Governance

- District and Board must:
    - Own decisions and lead the process
    - Avoid pushing decisions to individual schools
  - Balance:
    - Community input with decisive action
  - Communicate clearly:
    - “Here’s what we heard” → “Here’s how it informed the decision” → “Here’s the final decision and why”
  - Accept:
    - Not all stakeholders will agree, but process must be fair and credible
- 

## 13. Continuous Engagement and Feedback Loops

- Engagement should be:
  - Ongoing (before, during, and after decisions)
  - Accessible (multiple formats, times, languages)
- Include:
  - Parents, students, staff, and broader community

- Use:
    - Surveys, town halls, advisory groups, and possibly civic assemblies
  - Continue gathering feedback during implementation, not just planning
- 

## Bottom Line

A successful consolidation process is:

Transparent, data-informed, equitable, student-centered, and decisively led—  
with clear criteria, real community influence, full impact planning, and strong  
transition support already in place *before* decisions are announced.

**Question #3: As we move forward in developing an approach to school consolidation, what might be some ways to be unified as a district rather than divided as schools or groups?**

1. Emphasize a Shared District-Wide Purpose

- Focus messaging on “what’s best for all students”, not individual schools
  - Clearly communicate a shared vision (“North Star”) for the future of the district
  - Reinforce that:
    - All schools and communities are impacted
    - Consolidation is about district sustainability and equity, not winners vs. losers
  - Frame this as a collective challenge and opportunity, not competition
- 

2. Use Clear, Consistent, and Transparent Decision-Making

- Establish and share:
    - Clear criteria and data-driven decisions
    - A consistent process and timeline
  - Avoid:
    - Changing criteria or mixed messaging
    - Publishing multiple scenarios that pit schools against each other
  - Be firm and follow through on decisions to reduce uncertainty and conflict
- 

3. Shift the Narrative Away from Competition

- Avoid language that compares or labels schools (e.g., “strong vs. weak”)
  - Reinforce that:
    - Enrollment decline is not the fault of individual schools
    - All schools contribute value to the district
  - Consider limiting factors (like school choice dynamics) that can fuel competition
- 

4. Focus on Benefits and a Positive Future

- Highlight what students and schools will gain, such as:

- More programs, staffing, and resources
  - Better-funded, more sustainable schools
  - Frame consolidation as:
    - “Combining” or “building something new” rather than closing
  - Communicate a clear picture of the post-consolidation student experience
- 

## 5. Build a “One District” Identity

- Promote language like “our schools” vs. “my school”
  - Use consistent, district-wide messaging across all schools
  - Ensure all schools are represented and valued equally
  - Align decisions with district values, strategic plan, and equity goals
- 

## 6. Invest in Community-Building Across Schools

- Create opportunities for connection:
    - Joint school events, PTO collaborations, feeder activities
    - Student connections (pen pals, shared activities, transition events)
  - Encourage cross-school collaboration among staff and leaders
  - Hold meetings in neutral locations to reduce territorial dynamics
- 

## 7. Create New, Shared Identities After Consolidation

- For merged schools:
    - Develop new names, mascots, and cultures
    - Combine traditions from both communities
  - Treat consolidation like a fresh start, not one school absorbing another
  - Honor and celebrate the history of closing schools
- 

## 8. Prioritize Equity and Fairness

- Ensure decisions:
  - Are equitable (not just equal)
  - Consider impacts on marginalized and vulnerable communities
- Address perceptions of unfairness (e.g., uneven cuts, resource gaps)

- Distribute both benefits and burdens across the district
- 

## 9. Support Students, Staff, and Communities Through Transition

- Provide:
    - Clear transition plans and timelines
    - Emotional, academic, and logistical support
  - Reassure staff about job security and placement processes
  - Keep student groups together when possible to preserve relationships
- 

## 10. Engage the Community Authentically

- Involve stakeholders in meaningful, two-way dialogue
  - Show how feedback is used in decisions
  - Create district-wide conversations, not siloed school discussions
  - Use inclusive engagement strategies to ensure all voices are heard
- 

## 11. Build Trust Through Honesty and Follow-Through

- Acknowledge:
    - The difficulty, grief, and loss involved
  - Be:
    - Honest, direct, and proactive
    - Consistent in words and actions
  - Avoid surprises—clarity and predictability reduce division
- 

## 12. Center Students in All Messaging

- Keep focus on:
  - Student outcomes, experiences, and well-being
- Emphasize:
  - Kids' resilience and ability to adapt
  - Benefits like stronger programs and supports
- Model unity as adults—students will follow that lead

---

## Key Takeaways

- Unity comes from shared purpose, fairness, and transparency
- Division is driven by uncertainty, competition, and perceived inequity
- The district should:
  - Act as one system
  - Communicate clearly and consistently
  - Create opportunities to build new community together