

Summary of January 2020 *Community Conversations*

This summary of questions and feedback was compiled by School Board members and administration present for the *Community Conversations* series in January 2020.

Staff Community Conversation: Wednesday, January 8, 2020 (39 participants)

- **Enrollment, Budget, and General Staffing:**
 - Why are all of the staff reductions being done at once?
 - Why was the meeting to discuss enrollment, budget, and staffing held so early this year (November vs. January)?
 - Would we consider part time positions or sharing a role?
 - If someone is laid off, would it be considered to get a portion of the retirement funds? The longer someone has been here the higher percentage?
 - Have we looked at other alternatives for staffing for creative solutions? Have we asked or checked out how other schools in the area and their models of staffing?
 - Other districts are hiring interventionists, coaches, and support personnel (math, tech, reading, etc)--and these are not positions Swallow has historically had, but do we need these? Want to be sure support for students and staff remains, even if staff is reduced.

- **Middle School Model:**
 - Will Middle School be 2 sections throughout? The current 7th grade class is very large to make that work.
 - How will Middle School be staffed next year?

- **Employee Benefits:**
 - Why are staff charged for benefits when taking unpaid days?

Parents/Community Members: Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 8:30am and 6:30pm and Tuesday, January 14, 2020 at 8:30am and 6:30pm. (41 participants)

- **Enrollment, Budget, and General Staffing:**
 - Why are all of the reductions being done at once?
 - Can we work on communicating *what* a position does - especially when it's not a teacher?
 - What does the organizational chart for the ideal two section school look like?
 - Can positions, such as curriculum, be considered in reducing and splitting those duties to other positions?
 - Will you consider allowing 2 FTE's the ability to retire at a later date?
 - Can we just see who will retire and wait for retirees over time to step down staffing?
 - Does constant shuffling of teachers with a one section class impact teacher culture and efficacy?
 - If the average teacher salary and benefit cost is \$109,000, why does it cost \$200,000+ per student section?
 - Can the administration be reduced? Why are you only looking at teachers? What about support staff?
 - If we get rid of staff and then don't get rid of administration... citizens would be sad to see that balance.
 - We want smaller class sizes.

- **Forecasting:**

- What type of diligent work has been done in looking at forecast models to ensure that these cuts are sustainable and will not bring on more cuts in the near future?
 - Does the 5-year projection include assumed declining enrollment or is it based on level enrollment?
 - Have we done any backtesting to see if our projections will/would hold true?
 - What will class size look like in future years with these cuts, especially at 5-6-7-8 grades?
 - Do we feel we know what the reason was for the outlier of 44 kids in 4K a few years ago?
 - **Alternative Funding:**
 - Has the Board considered an operational referendum?
 - Have we looked at any other alternative options to increasing funding instead of eliminating 6 FTE's? Perhaps redistricting or fundraising?
 - Can we raise activity fees or fundraise for extra money?
 - Can we cut \$150,000 this year still and then go next year for an operational referendum for \$300,000 per year? Then, wait for the four teachers to retire to shift personnel.
 - Can we cut \$150,000 this year and wait one more year to move 6th grade to middle school? Then administrative contracts are up and the Business Manager position could be reduced to 0.5 and the Superintendent/Principal position combined.
 - Can we make no changes and try for an operational referendum for \$600,000 and then make cuts next year if this doesn't work out?
- **Middle School Model:**
 - Will Middle School be 2 sections throughout? The current 7th-grade class is very large to make that work.
 - How will Middle School be staffed next year?
 - What does 6th grade joining Middle School mean?
 - What do specials look like, specifically physical education, for 6-8 grade? Will they all be in the same class?
- **Programmatic Offerings:**
 - Spanish - is it needed 4K-8th-Grade, or can it be done in 6-8 instead?
 - Should we consider the music offerings if we have students who don't want to take it?
 - Can a study hall or some choice be given to MS students?
 - Concern brought up about grammar instruction in general
 - Teacher communication at the middle level needs to increase with families
 - Is our math achievement coming from kids attending outside tutoring or Swallow's impact?
- **School Safety:**
 - What is the next big safety "thing" that Swallow is working towards?
 - Do you work with a safety consulting firm? Would you consider a paid consult years down the road?
 - We should hire security consultants to review our processes.
- **Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health:**
 - What does Greg Zimmerman, who ran on a platform of mental health in children, think is going well in this regard at Swallow, could be improved?

- How is information being communicated about guidance lessons to home so there can be reinforcement? We would like more guidance information communicated.
 - What emotional supports are being embedded across the school and how can parents use them at home?
 - I just found out we do a mindful minute when I walked in this morning and it was happening--how and where is this being communicated?
 - Teachers should do Tier 1 problem-solving/emotional and social support--not guidance.
- **Communications:**
 - Can solo communication be sent regarding upcoming Board meetings? Especially work sessions with curriculum reviews? Maybe put a list in the registration packet?
 - What types of communication can we send to more thoroughly engage parents?
 - Is there a protocol for information/communication? Do parents know what the process is, and is it available to reference? (especially regarding student discipline/concerns to safety)
- **Diversity:**
 - Concern was raised about perceived lack of diversity, especially within social/financial inequities.
 - Could a sister school help with this?
 - Globally prepared citizens have experience with people from diverse backgrounds.
 - Would like to see more diversity with books, games, etc. to celebrate uniqueness.
- **Food Service/Snacks:**
 - Are there vegetarian options outside of pizza? Can we consider more vegetarian options? Can we consider vegetarian options for events (Evening with Elves, Daddy Daughter Dance)?
 - School snacks - can we make it as healthy as possible? Pop Tarts and cookies are not acceptable snacks in the middle of a school day.
 - School meals sometimes include corn dogs, hamburgers/cheeseburgers/hotdogs. These are not as healthy as I would like or expect.
- **Other:**
 - Can you please explain Act 10 for those of us that were not in the state at that time?
 - Is there a report on administrative positions and configuration available from the Board's study last year?
 - Would like to see more service projects. Everyone can make a contribution to society.