

LISTENING SESSION RESULTS



LOWELL COMMUNITY

MAY 11, 2017



Listening Session with the Community

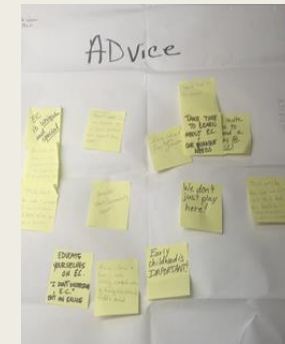
Example Questions...

What great things are happening in the Brainerd Schools?

What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd Schools?

What can the business community do for the school district?

What advice would you give to the decision makers?



What would you like the Headlines to be of the newspaper 10 years from now about the Brainerd Schools?

What are our biggest facility needs?

How can we improve facilities and enhance education?

Outline of Needs

-Questions and Results-



What great things are happening in the Brainerd schools? (#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Highly qualified, enthusiastic and caring teachers and staff (22)
- Wide variety of opportunities (arts, sports, music) (7)
- Awesome community pride and support (5)
- Blue ribbon schools (5)
- Community/neighborhood schools – small town, family feel (4)
- Invested, supportive parents (3)
- Choices for clubs and activities (3)
- Strong school pride (3)
- Graduates that are successful (2)
- High academic expectations (2)
- Awesome PTA (2)
- Caring administration (2)
- Excellent educational opportunities (2)



What great things are happening in the Brainerd schools?

- Not to be morbid, but many of the old schools (Whittier, Franklin) were 'fall out' shelters. This CANNOT be dismissed in these times.
- Buildings kept up well considering their age
- Fun extras (parade, walk-a-thons, games, track and field days, etc.)
- Teachers take time to build relationships and know the families of students
- Great history in our community
- Full-time gifted program at elementary level
- Involved principal
- Literacy coaches
- We love the community feel of Lowell and the caring environment – thanks to the staff!
- Great fine arts



What great things are happening in the Brainerd schools?

- Staff that go above and beyond for families in need
- Variety of learning tracks at high school to meet needs of all students
- Schools plugged into business needs in community
- Academic excellence!
- Students/kids are thought of first
- Graduation rate
- Do so much with so little
- High level of academic achievement
- JA opportunities
- Passionate leadership
- Great application of technology
- Orton Gillingham



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools? (#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Overcrowded buildings/lack of space/no room for growth (25)
- Aging/outdated/energy inefficient buildings – Need quality buildings to help recruit families to the Brainerd area (11)
- Non-secure entrances (12)
- Security (in buildings and on playground) (10)
- Inadequate classroom space (7)
- No parking (6)
- Unsafe parking/pick-up at Lowell, FMS, HS and others (5)
- Lack of storage (4)
- No breakout areas (4)
- No foreign language options until the 8th grade – only one foreign language at the HS & ASL (4)
- Class sizes are too big (4)
- Technology (3)
- Not enough time for lunch or recess (3)



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools? (#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Gifted program should be expanded with the size of the District (2)
- Teacher collaboration space (2)
- Gym availability (2)
- Cuts, cuts, cuts, cuts..... How do we keep cutting? (2)
- Playground needs more space and updating (2)
- Basement classrooms – ICK! (2)
- Poverty/low income families in our community (2)
- ADA compliance (2)
- Lack of library/media areas (2)
- No conference room at Lowell (2)
- Lack staff bathrooms in lounge areas (2)
- Funding (2)
- Lack of natural light (2)



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools?

- Not enough resources to keep up with innovation
- Changing taxpayer base demographic
- Green space
- Support for teachers (money, space)
- Challenging students who need to be challenged
- Not having to teach to the average
- SPED spaces not adequate
- Capital outlay to maintain current assets
- Class sizes increasing
- Space for nursing moms
- Keeping up with “the rest of the world”
- High school is too large
- Windows that don’t open



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools?

- Need more innovative programs and classes – life learning classes
- Long bus routes
- Teachers expected to do A LOT with very little (money and people)
- More art on the walls
- Way too much paperwork for Title I teachers and special education teachers
- Loss of specialty classes
- Variety of student needs to be met
- Old, dirty tile in the bathrooms
- Middle school music programs understaffed
- Lack of common resources
- Buildings not conducive to 21st century learning



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools?

- No bussing – children expected to walk in below zero weather one mile
- Bathrooms
- Time to get through curriculum but time for kids to play/move/exercise, as well
- Comfortable learning environment
- No elementary art class
- Not enough volunteers at some schools
- Support for all learners – high, average and challenged learners
- Could use more community mentors in our buildings
- Emergency exits blocked – storage
- Keep putting band-aids on
- Not enough time to meet all requirements for learning
- Lack of active learning space



What are our biggest challenges facing the Brainerd schools?

- Commons spaces are too few
- Too few after school options in elementary schools
- Safe bus rides – no monitors



What are the biggest facility needs for Lowell Elementary?

(#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Safe and secure entrance (12)
- Larger classrooms w/ storage (11)
- Larger cafeteria with more natural light (7)
- Add on – new, larger media center with more natural light and technology reading nooks (7)
- Add on to create more learning space - flexible space (6)
- Space/classrooms for collaboration (4)
- Green space (garden and grass) (4)
- Off street parking/larger parking lot (4)
- Meeting/conference room (4)
- More storage spaces (3)
- 2nd gym for movement/Physical education space (3)
- More space (3)
- Adult bathrooms (3)



What are the biggest facility needs for Lowell Elementary?

(#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Working elevator (3)
- Larger, improved area for special education students (3)
- Nursing room for working Moms (2)
- Larger multi-purpose room to replace cafeteria (2)
- Class offerings – More variety in learning opportunities (2)
- Separate, better, roomier health room (2)
- Larger bathrooms (2)
- Add classrooms (eliminate basement) (2)
- Flexible/open classrooms (2)
- Community support for our educators
- No basement classes
- Bathrooms
- Rooms for breakout sessions (out of halls, stairs and closets)



What are the biggest facility needs for Lowell Elementary?

- Large playground area
- Composting and less lunch waste
- More office space
- Common planning space
- Larger music storage
- Heat recapturing and energy efficiency upgrades
- STEAM space
- Keeping up with technology
- Larger gym
- Lounge
- It has to be completely gutted and added on to
- Specialty areas
- More room for community events – become community center
- Art supply storage



What are the biggest facility needs for Lowell Elementary?

- Bathroom on every level
- Add new common spaces
- More technology
- Art space
- Enrichment opportunities for all students
- Behavior intervention room
- Natural light
- Brainerd progressive schools
- Horticulture space
- Keep AGATE program within school
- Tear down schools in town and make one large school to accommodate all of the recommendations
- Safe environment for students with food allergies



What are the biggest facility needs for Lowell Elementary?

- Must have better nutrition
- Update cafeteria – no more Styrofoam plates – environmentally friendly products
- De-clutter classrooms
- Space for small group teaching
- Invest in teachers' ongoing development and support



What are the biggest facility needs for the District?

(#) = Quantity of Similar Type Responses

- Auditorium/performing arts spaces needed in all schools (6)
- Add on to High School – demolish south campus (4)
- Improve Forestview pick-up and drop-off (4)
- Bussing for all – shorter routes (3)
- Update high school (3)
- Update high school – new gym (3)
- Keep neighborhood schools (2)
- Adequate early childhood facilities (2)
- New high school – no walking between schools (2)
- New official size pool (2)
- Security
- Bigger high school pool with salt water instead of chlorine
- Improved transportation



What are the biggest facility needs for the District?

- Room to grow – Pre-K thru 12
- Bye Bye, Lincoln
- Not a separate high school..... kids hauling all books around
- No parking or driving between south campus and north campus
- Be proactive, not reactive
- A vision – not reactions!
- Eliminate pedophiles/sex offenders away from schools
- Replace Washington with new and efficient school
- Children more than ¼ mile away need bussing
- Middle school pool
- Pre-K rooms
- More classrooms
- Pest control



What are the biggest facility needs for the District?

- Baxter Elementary off big highway and away from graveyard
- District offices
- Pool with more lanes
- New central elementary
- Indoor tennis
- New Harrison school
- Balance needs and wants while being fiscally responsible
- Tear down all of the elementary schools in town and build one large elementary to accommodate all recommendations
- Community based small elementary school
- Theatre up to date
- Appropriate, secure funding/finances
- More space



What are the biggest facility needs for the District?

- Technology
- Secured entrances
- All buildings ADA
- Move out of WESB
- Preserve historic buildings in some way but repurpose as we can
- More parking
- Add new Baxter and Harrison schools
- Repair currently owned assets
- Locate all elementary schools in neighborhoods (not next to highways)
- Look at the challenge chart..... most of them
- Keep elementary small
- High school is too large – kids get lost – disorganized building



What are the biggest facility needs for the District?

- If they are solid structures, do whatever it takes to preserve them as schools
- Needs of gifted kids met across all locations
- Think for the future, not past with buildings
- Select build sites based on student location
- Sidewalks for walkers
- Keep up buildings core to neighborhoods
- New larger auditorium
- On duty security personnel
- Variety of arts for older students i.e. band, choir, art, etc.
- Add on a new wing with offices, secured entrance and classrooms



What would you like the headlines to be of the newspaper 10 years from now about the Brainerd schools?

- It Passed With Flying Colors.... Yippy!
- All New Schools Built In Brainerd
- Brainerd Is Minnesota's First All Net 0 School District
- ISD 181 Has Budget Surplus – Stop Giving Us Money!
- BHS Drug And Violence Free
- Brainerd School District Meeting The Needs Of Community
- BPS Celebrates A Decade Of Increased Graduation Rates
- Leaders In Academics And Technology
- All Blue Ribbon Schools – Again!
- ISD 181 Builds Working Agreement With Parents, Teachers, Taxpayers And Construction Fields
- Brainerd Leads The Way In Innovation!



What would you like the headlines to be of the newspaper 10 years from now about the Brainerd schools?

- AP Classes, Gifted Programs, Special Needs Being Met!
- Brainerd School District Creates Innovative Engaging New Space
- Funding Meeting The Education Needs
- Innovation Collaborating.... ISD 181 Is Building On To Their Community
- Brainerd Schools Lead State In Meeting Needs Of All Students
- Families Flock To Brainerd Due To Academic Excellence!
- Age And Condition Of Schools Are Excellent!
- Blue Ribbon Schools Again!
- ISD 181 Shows Care For Future Generations Thru Education, Art And Other Activities In New And Updated Buildings
- Highest Graduation Rate
- BPS Leads The Way In Career Readiness



What would you like the headlines to be of the newspaper 10 years from now about the Brainerd schools?

- Foreign Language And Engineering In Elementary Schools!
- Pregnancy Rates Drop. Sex Education Offered For All Ages.
- Elementary Schools Lead Homecoming Parade!
- Amazing Education Legacy
- 1 On 1 Space For Students And Educational Assistants
- Brainerd Schools #1 In Nation
- Another New Facility Approved For ISD 181
- Brainerd Schools Leading In State In Academics
- BPS Receives Award
- Blue Ribbon Schools
- 12th Blue Ribbon Award To BPS
- BPS Leads Nation In Innovation



What would you like the headlines to be of the newspaper 10 years from now about the Brainerd schools?

- ISD 181..... We Can Do It..... No Matter The Cost!
- Academic Growth Excels At ISD 181
- Brainerd Enrollment Up Due To New Facilities
- Language Immersion Brings Families To Brainerd Public Schools
- Brainerd Schools Rated In Top 10 Of The Nation
- Brainerd Leading The State In Education
- It Is The Best Place For All Students To Learn
- Cities Look To Brainerd Area For Education Opportunities



What advice would you give to the decision makers?

- Remember this is for our children – our future.
- Be fiscally responsible.
- Students first
- Remember that this will affect the future.
- Balance – 4 A's – can't be 100% academic
- Include retirees and summer residents to get approval.
- Stay within annual budgets.
- Kids first – It's worth every penny of investment.
- Take care of employees to keep the best.
- Communicate with the community – 2 way street.0
- Listen to the teachers and staff
- Remember that these kids are our future
- Look out 10, 15, 25 years – Big picture!



What advice would you give to the decision makers?

- Put a lot of thought/planning into ongoing capital improvement and upkeep budgeting.
- Teachers at all levels know what is needed and listen to them!
- Don't get hung up on negative feedback.
- Develop elementary program to help high achieving students.
- Build the most energy efficient buildings possible – investments will pay off in long term cost savings.
- Get out in public to get positivity for schools built.
- Listen to the teachers. They know what they need.
- We've made some knee jerk decisions in the past - try to avoid that going forward.
- Keep listening to public and staff.
- Pay teachers and support staff well – keep the best.



What advice would you give to the decision makers?

- Encourage diversity.
- Do what is best for kids always.
- Involve the senior population for support.
- Be visionary in making decisions for long-term impact.
- Effective communication with everyone involved.
- Keep students as the central focus of decision-making.
- Kids need to be the main focus.
- Don't look at it as a business but a "kid" business..... Our children and grandchildren.
- Bring back gifted and talented coordinator position and expand to middle school level.
- Take into consideration the expenses that come with fixing old buildings.
- Build big enough for the future.



What advice would you give to the decision makers?

- Invest in gifted education – coordinator, teachers, aides.
- Listen to the people who are in the school regularly.
- Figure this out..... It is all of our responsibility.
- Meet needs of all students – gifted and challenged and average.
- Ensure community involvement.
- Listen to kids and staff in the trenches.
- Make the “why?” clear to those without kids – how it benefits the retired community.
- Do not focus on elements that will not directly affect student benefit.
- How do you accommodate meeting all of the recommendations of parking, natural light, more room, larger playground in a low income area?
- Life skills are being left out (cooking for example) – add curriculum to address this.



What advice would you give to the decision makers?

- No Styrofoam trays for lunch.
- Do everything to keep and replace schools in residential areas. Stop the crazy busing in town.
- Additions and remodels should be done in chunks so as NOT to shock the building trades and those paying for it.

