



## Superintendent Community Meetings Synthesis (Districtwide) 2026

The Superintendent Community Engagement Series was a structured, districtwide effort conducted from February through April 2026 to gather direct input from families, students, staff, and community members through seven facilitated in-person meetings and one virtual session. The meetings were organized at school locations based on School Board Director districts. Three guiding questions were asked of small groups to intentionally surface community experiences, recurring themes, and actionable priorities, while building trust through direct engagement with Superintendent Shuldiner.

- [What is going well?](#)
- [What is not going well?](#)
- [What are tangible ideas for improvement?](#)
- [Participant Feedback on the Meeting](#)

Central office staff ensured all feedback was consistently written on poster paper based on conversations at small group tables. After the meetings, pictures of all the posters were taken, notes were transcribed, and meeting-based summaries were produced. The summary below captures themes synthesized across all the meetings based on the number of mentions across meetings. Each small group had 5-10 participants on average, so if 20 groups mentioned a particular topic, that meant that 100-200 people were discussing that theme during a meeting. The document below summarizes the themes to reflect what communities are focused on, what concerns them, and where they see opportunities for improvement. This document is summarized in a public-facing one-pager.

### The following schools were locations for in-person engagement sessions:

- **District 1-Director Rankin**  
James Baldwin Elementary  
March 26, 2026
- **District 2-Director Smith**  
Salmon Bay K-8  
March 10, 2026
- **District 3-Director Briggs**  
Eckstein Middle School  
March 17, 2026
- **District 4-Director Mizrahi**  
McClure Middle School  
March 24, 2026
- **District 5-Director Song**  
Bailey Gatzert Elementary  
February 26, 2026
- **District 6-Director Topp** West Seattle  
Elementary  
March 31, 26
- **District 7-Director LaValle**  
South Shore K-8  
March 3, 2026

## What is Going Well?

### 1. Strong, Caring Educators and Staff

- Teachers, counselors, and principals are consistently praised as **dedicated, passionate, and highly invested** in students' success.
- Staff are described as **caring, compassionate, and relationship-focused**, often going above and beyond for students.

**Frequency: 46 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- *"Teachers are engaged and trying to do well."* -McClure MS
  - *"Dedicated caring adults in our schools."* -West Seattle ES
  - *"Passionate staff, skilled teachers – so many incredible teachers."* -South Shore
  - *"The teachers and staff at my kids' school are really committed and responsive."*-Virtual Meeting
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### 2. Positive School Communities

- Families value a **strong sense of community and belonging** in schools.
- PTAs, PTOs, and parent engagement are seen as major strengths where present.
- Schools are described as **welcoming, inclusive, and culturally diverse**.

**Frequency: 34 group mentions**

**Example Quotes**

- *"Our community is strong, supportive & engaged."* -Salmon Bay K-8
  - *"Community and coming together – parents watching out for school."* -South Shore
  - *"Strong sense of community in some schools."* -McClure MS
  - *"Kids are happy to be at school."*-Virtual Meeting
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### 3. Dual Language and Multilingual Programs

- Dual language programs are repeatedly cited as a **major strength and point of pride**.
- Families appreciate **language immersion opportunities** and want these programs expanded and sustained.

**Frequency: 28 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- *"Dual language program @ Dearborn Park – cultural enrichment."* -South Shore
  - *"Spanish/Mandarin dual language – an important neighborhood hub."* -South Shore
  - *"Moved to Beacon Hill for dual language – love walking to school."* -South Shore
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### 4. Enrichment and Extracurricular Opportunities

- Access to **music, art, PE, theater, and STEM activities** is celebrated.
- Programs like **after-school enrichment, sports, and cultural events** are viewed as highly valuable.

**Frequency: 22 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- *"Instrumental music in elementary, sports and extracurricular."* -McClure MS
- *"Access to music/art/PE – kids learning to read."* -West Seattle ES

- “School musical at South Shore, after-school activities (free at Mercer).” -South Shore
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## 5. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Student Support

- SEL initiatives and mental health supports are recognized as **important and effective**, especially post-pandemic.
- Schools that integrate SEL into daily practice are seen positively.

**Frequency: 17 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- “SEL @ elementary going well – centering student need.” -South Shore
  - “Social emotional learning emphasis is widely viewed as beneficial.” -McClure MS
  - “Restorative justice messaging, great library, books + librarian.” -South Shore
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## 6. Communication Improvements at the School Level

- **Principal and teacher communication** is often praised when it is consistent and personal.
- Superintendent’s weekly emails are noted as a **positive step toward transparency**.

**Frequency: 14 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- “Recent weekly emails are positive, feel inclusive of whole district.” -McClure MS
  - “Superintendent emails – a breath of fresh air.” -McClure MS
  - “School-based communication is consistent (i.e., from teachers).” West Seattle ES
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## 7. Access to Basic Needs and Equity Efforts

- Free breakfast and lunch programs are appreciated.
- Community partnerships and resource supports (e.g., food pantries, health services) are seen as critical strengths.

**Frequency: 11 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- “Free breakfast and lunches for students who need them.” West Seattle ES
  - “School as center for community resources – food, healthcare, mental health.” South Shore
  - “Family support workers @ OneAmerica help people.” -South Shore
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## 8. Academic Opportunities and Rigor Where Available

- Families value **advanced learning options**, HC programs, and **year-ahead math** where available.
- Positive feedback on **Science of Reading implementation** and literacy coaching in some schools.

**Frequency: 12 group mentions**

**Example Quotes:**

- “Year-ahead math program in middle schools.” -McClure MS
- “HC program improving + communication within past year.” -West Seattle ES
- “Science of Reading positive impact, literacy coaches support teachers.” -West Seattle ES

## What is not going well?

### 1. Budget, Staffing, and Enrollment Instability

Families and staff repeatedly cited **budget shortfalls, opaque allocation processes, and staffing instability** as major concerns. The October “staffing shuffle” was described as disruptive and demoralizing. Large class sizes and reliance on PTA fundraising were seen as inequitable.

#### Key Issues:

- Budget process viewed as opaque and inequitable
- October adjustments destabilize schools
- Class sizes too large
- PTA fundraising creates disparities

**Frequency: 52 group mentions**

#### Example Quotes & Sources:

- *“Budget process not equitable for Title I schools.” — James Baldwin ES*
  - *“October staffing adjustments are destabilizing and poorly understood.” — McClure MS*
  - *“Class sizes too big – 32+ students in high school.” — West Seattle ES*
  - *“PTA funding creates inequities.” — Salmon Bay K-8*
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### 2. Communication, Transparency, and Trust

There is a **deep frustration with inconsistent, unclear, and reactive communication** from the district. Families described “parent whiplash” from constant changes and reversals. Lack of clarity on decision-making processes erodes trust.

#### Key Issues:

- Inconsistent messaging across platforms
- Lack of clear rationale for decisions
- Too many communication channels, no single source of truth
- Families feel feedback is collected but not acted on

**Frequency: 47 group mentions**

#### Example Quotes & Sources:

- *“Communication inconsistent, fragmented, or overwhelming.” — West Seattle ES*
  - *“Parent whiplash due to constant changes and reversals.” — James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Communication, like what are our actual goals, feels like things flip-flop back and forth a lot.”-Virtual Meeting*
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### 3. Special Education (SPED), IEPs, and 504 Supports

SPED services were described as **inconsistent, underfunded, and difficult to navigate**. Families reported delays, lack of staffing, and unclear accountability for IEP and 504 plans.

#### Key Issues:

- Uneven implementation of IEPs and 504s
- Lack of funding and staffing for supports
- Families struggle to identify points of contact
- Extended Resource and inclusion models not applied consistently

**Frequency: 41 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“Inconsistent implementation of IEPs and 504s across schools.” — James Baldwin ES*
  - *“504 plans often lack funding, staffing, and clear ownership.” — McClure MS*
  - *“Families struggle to navigate processes and identify points of contact.” — South Shore*
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**4. Highly Capable (HC), Advanced Learning, and Academic Rigor**

Concerns centered on **loss of rigor, unclear pathways, and inequitable access** to advanced learning. Families fear that equity efforts are being misinterpreted as lowering standards.

**Key Issues:**

- HC services inconsistent across schools
- Lack of differentiation
- Loss of “walk-to-math” and acceleration options
- Teachers lack time and training for differentiation
- Perception that rigor is being “flattened”

**Frequency: 38 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“HC program disparity between schools and neighborhood schools.” — McClure MS*
  - *“Loss of walk-to-math and limited differentiation frustrates families.” — James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Rigor moved to lowest common denominator.” — McClure MS*
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**5. Technology Overuse and Screen Time**

Families expressed concern about **excessive reliance on technology**, especially in elementary grades, and lack of clear policies on device use and AI.

**Key Issues:**

- Too much screen time replacing hands-on learning
- Lack of districtwide cell phone policy
- AI use without clear governance
- Over-purchasing of digital programs

**Frequency: 29 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“Too much screen use in elementary.” — West Seattle ES*
  - *“District buying too many digital programs.” — West Seattle ES*
  - *“AI use in the classroom – parents want a voice in decisions.” — West Seattle ES*
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**6. Safety, Student Behavior, and School Climate**

Safety concerns included **violent incidents, inconsistent discipline, and lack of urgency in responses**. Families want clear protocols and accountability.

**Key Issues:**

- Unsafe behavior escalating without intervention
- Inconsistent discipline practices
- Traffic and pedestrian safety issues

- Need for trauma-informed practices

**Frequency: 26 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“Unsafe behavior impacted students – wasn’t addressed.”* — West Seattle ES
- *“SPS response to violent incident took too long.”* — South Shore
- *“Need clear, consistent safety protocols.”* — West Seattle ES

**7. Equity and Resource Disparities**

Equity was described as a **stated value but not consistently implemented**. PTA support was celebrated but funding can create uneven access to programs deepen disparities.

**Key Issues:**

- Title I and alternative schools hit hardest by cuts
- PTA fundraising creates structural inequities
- Equity seen as a “buzzword” without follow-through

**Frequency: 24 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“Equity follow-through not always present.”* — McClure MS
- *“Title I and alternative schools disproportionately impacted by budget instability.”* — James Baldwin ES
- *“PTA fundraising creates structural inequities.”* — Salmon Bay K-8

**8. Volunteer and Family Engagement Barriers**

Families want to engage but find **volunteer processes confusing and slow**. Feedback loops are weak, leaving families feeling unheard.

**Key Issues:**

- Volunteer approval process cumbersome
- Engagement often happens after decisions are made
- Lack of multilingual and culturally responsive outreach

**Frequency: 18 group mentions**

**Example Quotes & Sources:**

- *“Volunteer process is confusing and cumbersome.”* — James Baldwin ES
- *“Community feedback is not always followed by visible action.”* — South Shore
- *“Make it easier to volunteer in your child’s school.”*-Virtual Meeting

**Ideas for Improvement**

**1. Budget Transparency and Resource Equity**

Families and staff want **clear, transparent budgeting processes** and **equitable resource allocation** across schools. They also suggested reducing central office costs and prioritizing student-facing positions.

**Frequency: 44 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Make budget process transparent and easy to understand.”—McClure MS*
  - *“Fund student-facing positions over non-student-facing roles.” –West Seattle ES*
  - *“Reduce central office overhead; redirect funds to classrooms.” –James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Create a citywide PTSA fund-sharing model to reduce inequities” –Salmon Bay K-8*
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## **2. Staffing Stability and Baseline Services**

Calls for **consistent staffing models, full-time nurses, counselors, and librarians,** and **eliminating October staffing adjustments** were frequent.

**Frequency: 39 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Guarantee baseline staffing: full-time nurse, librarian, counselor in every school.” - McClure MS*
  - *“End October staffing shuffle; use accurate enrollment projections.” -West Seattle ES*
  - *“Stabilize staffing with multi-year planning.”- James Baldwin ES*
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## **3. Improve Communication and Engagement**

Families want **simplified, consistent communication systems** and **authentic engagement early in decision-making.**

**Frequency: 36 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“One or two platforms for all district communication.” South Shore*
  - *“Provide clear rationale for decisions and close the feedback loop.” James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Engage families earlier in planning, not after decisions are made.” McClure MS*
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## **4. Strengthen Academic Rigor, Differentiation, and Advanced Learning**

Suggestions focused on **restoring walk-to-math, expanding HC services in neighborhood schools,** and **ensuring rigor for all students.**

**Frequency: 32 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Bring back walk-to-math and acceleration options without gatekeeping.” -McClure MS*
  - *“Provide HC and advanced learning in every neighborhood school.” -James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Maintain rigor while ensuring equity.” -Eckstein MS*
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## **5. Expand Dual Language and Multilingual Programs**

Families strongly advocated for **sustaining and expanding dual language programs** and ensuring **staffing and curriculum support.**

**Frequency: 28 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Fully fund dual language programs and expand pathways through high school.” -South Shore*

- *“Recruit and retain bilingual teachers.” -West Seattle ES*
  - *“Provide curriculum in all program languages.” -James Baldwin ES*
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## **6. Reduce Technology Overuse and Clarify Policies**

Many ideas called for **limiting screen time, clear cell phone policies, and intentional tech use.**

**Frequency: 24 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Implement districtwide phone-free policy for MS/HS.” - West Seattle ES*
  - *“Reduce tech use in early grades; return to books and hands-on learning.” -James Baldwin ES:*
  - *“Create clear AI governance and parent communication.” -South Shore*
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## **7. Improve Safety and Student Well-being**

Families want **clear safety protocols, trauma-informed practices, and better mental health supports.**

**Frequency: 21 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Standardize safety procedures and communicate them clearly.” - South Shore*
  - *“Increase counselors and social workers for mental health support.” - West Seattle ES*
  - *“Partner with community organizations for after-school safety.” -James Baldwin ES*
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## **8. Enhance Family Engagement and Volunteer Access**

Simplify volunteer processes and **create more opportunities for families to participate.**

**Frequency: 18 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Streamline volunteer application process.” -James Baldwin ES*
  - *“Offer multilingual engagement opportunities.” -South Shore*
  - *“Create clear roles for family involvement in decision-making.” -Salmon Bay K-8*
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## **9. Facilities and School Consolidation Planning**

Families want **transparent, well-communicated facilities planning and clear rationale for any consolidations.**

**Frequency: 15 group mentions**

**Sources & Example Quotes:**

- *“Explain the ‘why’ behind school closures and involve communities early.” -West Seattle ES*
- *“Invest in maintaining existing buildings before new construction.” -McClure MS*
- *“Have a clear plan for consolidating schools and communicate it well to families.” -Virtual Meeting*

## Summary of Participant Feedback on the Meeting

### In Person Sessions: (7 Sessions)

Participants noticed that meetings felt more respectful, engaging, and meaningful than past district efforts. Across both in-person and virtual formats, respondents described meetings as welcoming and purposeful, with valuable opportunities to share input, particularly through small-group discussions. At the same time, feedback highlighted there were less clear facilitation and note-taking in breakout sessions, as well as challenges with technology, interpretation, and language access that limited effectiveness, especially online. Participants also emphasized the need for clearer follow-through, including synthesized themes, defined next steps, and intentional attention to equity so all voices are heard consistently.

*Note: 354 responses with two hundred and 63 responders that are interested in participating in further conversations.*

Statement/Question	Agree / Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Was the meeting objective / purpose clear?	82.5%	13%	4.5%
Did the meeting start and end on time?	92.9%	5.2%	1.9%
Was the atmosphere positive and welcoming?	93.2%	5.7%	1.1%
Did you have the opportunity to contribute?	91.8%	6.3%	1.9%
Were important matters not relevant to the conversation tabled?	40.3%	46.8%	12.9%
Did the meeting leave you feeling energized/supported?	57.2%	28.3%	14.5%
Was the meeting valuable?	75.5%	20.4%	4.1%
Was the meeting length adequate?	55%	20.5%	24.5%
Was there something wanted/expected to discuss that was not?	37.3%	39.5%	23.2%
Is the meeting structured well?	73.4%	18.7%	7.9%

### The responders\* are:

6	Students
82	Staff
280	Family/Caregiver
1	School Board Director
30	Community Member
10	Other

*\*some are in multiple categories*

### Virtual Meeting (1 session)

Results from the virtual session show that many participants found the meeting purpose clear and the overall atmosphere welcoming. Most respondents agreed they had opportunities to contribute and that the meeting provided value. A majority also indicated that the meeting generally stayed on schedule. However, compared to in-person sessions, agreement was lower regarding meeting structure and the extent to which participants felt energized or supported afterward. Neutral responses were relatively high on questions about unaddressed topics and whether certain issues were tabled. These results suggest that while the virtual format supported participation, there are opportunities to strengthen facilitation, structure, and depth of discussion.

*Note: 96 total responses for virtual sessions with 73 responders that are interested in participating in further conversations.*

Statement/Question	Agree / Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Was the meeting objective / purpose clear?	82.3%	9.4%	8.3%
Did the meeting start and end on time?	78%	14%	8%
Was the atmosphere positive and welcoming?	87.5%	10.4%	2.1%
Did you have the opportunity to contribute?	83.3%	12.5%	4.2%
Were important matters not relevant to the conversation tabled?	28.2%	53%	18.8%
Did the meeting leave you feeling energized / supported?	55.2%	25%	19.8%
Was the meeting valuable?	70.8%	21.8%	7.4%
Was the meeting length adequate?	60.4%	19.8%	19.8%
Was there something you wanted / expected to discuss that was not?	37.5%	42.7%	19.8%
Is the meeting structured well?	56.3%	29.1%	14.6%

#### The responders\* are:

0 Students  
 35 Staff  
 56 Family/Caregiver  
 0 School Board Director  
 4 Community Member  
 1 Other

*\*some are in multiple categories*