

Superintendent Community Engagement Series

What We Heard from Our Community



Thornton Creek Elementary School | September 29, 2026

Families and community members shared perspectives on academic rigor, school design, and school safety and security. The following themes summarize what participants valued, their concerns, and ideas for improvement.



What Participants Said Is Going Well:

Academic Rigor

Dedicated educators and meaningful learning. Families praised experienced teachers, teachers who know students well, high expectations, and hands-on, project-based instruction that supports different learning styles.

Well-rounded academic opportunities. Participants valued advanced math and Highly Capable pathways, student autonomy, collaborative learning, and arts, music, library, PE, movement, and social-emotional learning.

School Design

Variety of school choices. Neighborhood, option, K-8, Dual Language, STEM, Highly Capable, and expeditionary-learning programs give families different ways to meet students' needs.

School communities, innovative option schools, and enrollment improvements. Families appreciated engaged neighborhood communities, innovative option schools, earlier enrollment timelines, and movement on waitlists.

School Safety and Security

Existing safety practices. Participants noted badge-controlled entry, emergency drills, attendance calls, and bus information that helps families know where students are.

Specialized staffing, training, and multilingual communication. Families valued specialized supports for students with significant needs and communication with multilingual and immigrant families in their home languages.

What Participants Said Is Not Going Well:

Academic Rigor

Inconsistent challenge and support. Expectations and differentiated instruction vary across schools and classrooms. Advanced opportunities, including Honors, AP, advanced math, and world languages, are not equally accessible.

Limited flexibility and visibility. Prescribed schedules and curricula may constrain teachers; participants cited excessive screen-based instruction, insufficient physical materials, and unclear information about learning and progress.

School Design

Uncertainty about programs and schools. Families raised concerns about closures, staffing, enrollment decisions, option-school definitions, and whether valued programs will continue.

Unequal access and resources. Waitlists, transportation, geography, childcare, and assignment processes limit options. Families also noted large classes and uneven access to librarians, nurses, counselors, Special Education, and music.

School Safety and Security

Behavioral and physical safety. Families questioned the adequacy of staffing and Tier 2 supports, bullying response procedures, campus access, and perimeter security.

Communication and devices. Participants sought clearer drill and incident updates, transportation contacts, and consistent expectations for cell phones, smart watches, and tablets. Budget reductions raised concerns about staffing and safety supports.

Ideas Participants Shared for Improvement:

Academic Rigor

Expand academic pathways. Offer more equitable access to Honors, AP, advanced math, world languages, and above-grade-level learning, with small-group instruction and meaningful differentiation.

Preserve effective teaching. Maintain consistent expectations while protecting teacher flexibility and project-based learning; reduce unnecessary screen time and improve communication about student progress.

School Design

Strengthen stability and transparency. Communicate changes earlier, explain decisions, and show how community feedback shapes plans for schools and programs.

Use demand and exit data to guide access. Consider waitlists, enrollment patterns, and family choices when expanding popular programs; address transportation and assignment barriers, reduce class sizes, and strengthen student supports.

School Safety and Security

Clarify safety procedures. Provide adequate behavioral supports and staffing, clear points of contact for bullying and transportation concerns, and timely attendance, drill, and incident communication in families' home languages.

Review facilities and technology expectations. Assess fencing, campus access, transportation and drop-off practices, and clearer districtwide expectations for student devices such as cell phones, smart watches, and other devices.

These themes reflect feedback shared by participants at the Thornton Creek Elementary School community engagement meeting.

What's Next:

Superintendent Shuldiner will use this feedback to guide both short-term and long-term actions in leading the district. He plans to continue monthly community engagement sessions, including conversations focused on specific topics and on different school levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Feedback about the meetings themselves will be used to improve the format and discussions over time. Thank you for your continued support of Seattle Public Schools.

Summary of Meetings:

[Visit the website to learn more](#)