



Executive Summary

As a result of the small group work activity
Community Engagement Session #1 • April 27, 2022

Seventy-two people participated in the second Unite U-46 community engagement session on May 11, 2022. Twenty individuals signed in at the in-person session at the U-46 Welcome Center and 52 people logged in for the Zoom presentation, 47 of these individuals completed the virtual session sign-in form.

The informational presentation provided an overview of the Unite U-46 process from the community co-chairs, while an introduction to U-46, which included information about the district, enrollment, finances, school buildings and the facility master plan was presented by Superintendent Dr. Tony Sanders

Following the presentation, participants worked in 35 small groups virtually and in-person to complete the tasks discussed below. To view the presentation and verbatim responses, visit UniteU46.org. Following is a summary of the responses from the groups.

Task #1: Surprise and Concern

Based on the information you learned tonight, what is your group's biggest surprise and concern about U-46?

Ten small group responses specifically mentioned the age of the buildings as their biggest surprise. Nine comments were related to being surprised about the District's strong, positive financial position and reserve level. There were seven statements related to the proposed retirement, rebuilding and renovation of District buildings and the number of buildings in U-46. Six comments referenced the transition to middle school and preK, while five were related to the decline in enrollment. There were also comments about overcrowding, how buildings drive program offerings in some situations and the zoning of bus driving.

The biggest concern of small group participants was how the transition to updated and new buildings, and to middle school and districtwide preK programming will impact students and staff. Tied with this are concerns about the potential of moving into overcrowded classrooms and how boundary changes will impact students and programs. Some comments also involved ensuring the safety and security of students and staff, transportation, the impact on specialized programs and the need for more details on how changes could be funded.

Task #2: Key Questions

Step 1

Keeping in mind the District's vision, the charge from the Board of Education, and the presentation this evening, what issues or topics would you like to explore further as we work toward creating our recommendations? What is important to discuss as we continue our Unite U-46 process?

Step 2

Now, prioritize each of the topics as high, medium, or low priority. Include only the issues that your group listed and generally agreed upon in completing Task #1.

Step 3

Starting with your group's highest priority, what key questions or comments would your group like addressed in each area you have identified?

Topics and issues revolving around the shift to the middle school model and transitioning students and staff to new or updated buildings were the top priorities participants think are essential to discuss through the Unite U-46 process. This was followed by finance, specialized programs and the transition to the middle school and preK models.

Specifically, participants requested additional information on how students will transition from elementary school to the middle school model, how transportation will be handled and if students will remain in or be moved to neighborhood schools. Many of the other issues listed below were woven into the transition topic, with participants looking for more information about the timeline for each stage of the facility plan and the length of time for various construction phases.

In the area of finance, participants had questions about the cost of the projects, the tax implications and how updates would be funded.

Several groups and tables listed specialized programs, including special education, extracurricular offerings, gifted education and dual-language program as areas they would like to explore further as recommendations are developed. With one table writing, "What is the impact of this plan to students in specialized programs whether it be special need services or students in specific pathways or English learner programs?"

The topics of PreK and middle school were listed more than 20 times as areas that should be further discussed in the Unite U-46 process. Questions about preK were varied, but some tables focused on the safety of the students, transportation challenges and how the preK program will be implemented.

In the area of middle school programs, there were questions about class sizes, social emotional learning, the transition to middle school and curriculum and programming, including, "What are the details as to why the move to middle school?" and "Why is a middle school program more effective for 6th graders?"

The following are all of the topic areas and the priority rankings suggested by participants. Many of the topics were linked to one another in the responses:

Topic Area	Listed	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	No Priority Listed
Transition	23	14	4	3	2
Finance	18	12	1	3	2
Specialized Programs	11	2	5		4
PreK	11	4	4	2	1
Middle School	11	7	2	2	
Timeline	7	6	1		
Overcrowding	7	5	2		
Boundaries	7	4	2		1
Staffing	6	4	1		1
Facilities	6	2	3	1	
Sustainability	5	1	2	1	1
Safety	5	5			
Equity	5	2	2		1
Communication About Unite U-46	5	3	1	1	
Transportation	4	1	2		1
SEL	4	3			
Hawk Hollow	2	2			
History	1				

Consensus Points

- Overall, participants were surprised by:
 - The age of U-46's buildings
 - The District's strong financial standing and reserve balance
 - The need to retire, rebuild or renovate many District buildings
- Unite U-46 participants are concerned about, want to learn more about and discuss how the transition to updated buildings and preK and middle school will occur and how it will impact students and staff. They would also like to learn more about the rationale behind moving to the middle school and preK models and why it is beneficial for student success.
- The topic of finances should be explored during the Unite U-46 process, including how building updates could be funded and the overall investment to retire, renovate and repurpose existing buildings to meet the needs of students now and in the future.

- Through the Unite U-46 process, the topics of specialized programs, class size, the impact of boundary changes, safety and security, sustainability and equity, and how these topics impact school buildings should be explored and discussed.

**For a complete listing of all responses,
see the CES #1 Verbatim Response Document on the website, UniteU46.org**