



**Conversation Session**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**April 8, 2021**

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***What is a Conversation Session?***

Community Conversation Sessions are designed to allow for members of our school communities (students, staff, parents/family members, and community stakeholders) and members of the Parent and Community Advisory Council to meet with Board Members to ***discuss important topics, issues, and give input into the work of the Board of Education.***

These sessions are an opportunity for the Board to engage in ***two-way*** communication with community members on Board work. Conversation Sessions began in January 2021. For more information, please visit our website: [www.philasd.org/schoolboard/advisorycouncil/](http://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/advisorycouncil/)

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PCAC Hosts: Reverend Chandra Williams & Ginny McGill

Board Member Host: Leticia Egea-Hinton

Other Board Members Present: Julia Danzy, Maria McColgan, Lisa Salley, Reginald Streater, Cecelia Thompson

Agenda Topic: Improving Public Education

Number of attendees: 32

Stakeholder Groups represented: faith-based leaders, community members, current district staff, current parents

**Summary of Feedback Collected from Participants:**

***Q1: How can we improve public education?***

- It is important that we learn each child's learning styles.
- Loop in the parents as a part of the learning and teaching for. Coming up with ways to teach children the way they learn.
- The District should build upon and/or partner with faith-based programs and local Faith based Leaders in the Community. Sometimes a change in policies has been a barrier to this actually being implemented. Faith Based leaders can still be impactful without being religious.



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- What can the budget be actually used for? (approximately 3 billion dollars)... Programming for children who need additional help and invest in community partners to help with children who have fallen behind during COVID.
- There needs to be a focus on teachers and a lens on their attendance and they should be held accountable if they fall short.
- There needs to be a grass roots level of support for the schools.
- Is there a possibility of duplicating the “Community Schools” model to expand the pool of resources?
- Community schools have offered mental health and social-emotional support. Can more money be spent from the budget to duplicate this model? There has already been some shifting of funds to support schools as it relates to mental health needs.
- Restore K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 structure of schools; make schools more visually more attractive.
- Parents are nervous when leaving their kids in a school for the first time (Pre-K, K); the schools are a central part of the village – especially given the nature of the complex households of the students.
- “Sense of community” and “community partners” matter.
- School facilities conditions and presentation matters. Children should have pride in what their schools look like. This will help children be more receptive to reading education
- Teacher retention in one school is important and helps make the schools feel like family. What the teachers are requesting now is important. Counselors and counseling support mattered. Goal is to calm kids down, allow them to be heard and get them back into the classroom.
- Increased ability to view things through a trauma-informed lens;; supports the teachers more; needs additional support for special needs student population.
- Add life skills such as financial literacy, resume writing, and check writing, etc.

### ***Q2: What Specifically Should We Prioritize to Help Ensure that Every Philadelphia Student Has Access to a Quality Education:***

- Don't hire retired police officers; check charter school achievement records – they are not necessarily better.
- At least 50% of students don't live in the area – even though there are sufficient enough local children to fill the school; have maximum occupancy constraints due to covid; two teachers are leaving that will make classroom size inconsistent with covid guidelines. There is extra busing required currently. The connection of getting the resource to the people with the point of need. This disconnect needs to be improved. Parents and teachers have to stop viewing each other as the enemy.



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- Utilize retired teachers in the classroom and/or local schools - this should be an easy transition after these teachers have retired – provided an example where a teacher retired in June and could not be found in the system by September; community, and closeness of community is critical. Retired teachers want to volunteer.
- All schools need to have the feeling of community and to have the same access to education. Parents need to be partners in their kids' education and made aware of any learning gaps that may be impacting their child's ability to learn early on.
  
- What can we be doing to ensure that every student in Philadelphia is given an education that allows them to achieve their dreams?
- Make sure teachers are held accountable and to a standard and if they are not meeting the standard, then consequences should follow.
- We need to look into and hear from other districts on curriculums that have worked. Look at how districts have turned around failing schools.
- The Goals and Guardrails are intended for transparency and telling the truth to families and the community about where the district's priorities are.
- It needs to be and is important for children to learn basic life skills in school such as financial literacy. Maybe partnering with some of the fortune 500 companies in the area such as 5 Below and Comcast, to teach children life skills and gain experience in the field they desire to have a career in.
- Add extracurriculars back into the curriculum.
- Add practical skills such as learning how to write a check.
- Redirecting money to help prepare students to get into the CTE Programs and to pass the test.
- We have to get with the times! Add in programs like STEM, business academy, which can prepare children for future careers in these careers that are bursting with opportunity.
- Bring back Saturday school for skill training and classes.
- Learn from excellent practitioners in the School districts who are already experts in creating programs such as these and reward them for being innovative and duplicating the programs in other areas/schools in the district.