

LISTEN • LEARN • PLAN • LEAD



WE LISTENED. WE LEARNED.

An Update from Superintendent Alicia Thompson



**WICHITA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS®**

To The Wichita Public Schools Community,

For the past six months, thousands of stakeholders have invested time, thought and passion into conversations about the future of our district. Since beginning my journey as Superintendent of Schools, I have been lifted by the commitment that so many of you have to the success of young people in Wichita, and the power of our students to change the world.

I know you're proud of our commitment to ALL kids – and I heard you say that we need to do more to meet the needs of our diverse learners. I know you feel our schools are safe – and I heard parents and teachers tell me that we need to find new and innovative strategies to address the behavior challenges that some of our students bring with them to school. You told me you appreciate the many ways we communicate with and engage our employees and our community in the work of the district – and I heard your concerns about improving morale and enhancing communication so that all stakeholders can play a meaningful role in supporting our students.



Last fall, we held 20 stakeholder meetings and numerous conversations with business, faith and community leaders. We engaged students, staff, parents and citizens from all parts of our community, and provided opportunities to share thoughts through our website and in our first-ever Twitter town hall. Each time, we asked these questions:

- What is our district doing well?
- What areas present the greatest challenge?
- What needs to be in place in order to move the district forward?
- How can we best communicate with you in order to promote an open and transparent district culture?

The themes presented here represent the highlights of your comments. If you'd like to review all of the feedback received in these listening sessions, visit www.usd259.org/superentryplan. Your feedback will shape the strategic plan that the Wichita Board of Education is developing, which will guide our next five years in the Wichita Public Schools. I look forward to sharing that plan with you later this spring.

I'm WPS Proud to serve as your superintendent, and I look forward to our journey to help ALL Wichita students succeed!

Regards,

Dr. Alicia Thompson, Superintendent
Wichita Public Schools

We heard that our district should...

CHALLENGE ALL LEARNERS TO SUCCEED

All learning styles need to be taken into consideration. Some children learn by doing, by hands on, and others by reading. Don't force everyone to learn the same way. – *Community Member*

Collaboration - partnerships between departments to improve curriculum – *WPS Student*

Time in the schedule for foundational skills to be implemented, especially in lower grades like pre-K and kindergarten. – *WPS Teacher and Parent*

FOCUS ON COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

There needs to be more enrichment and higher standards for students who are at grade level and/or above the level. There are so many choices that it gets overwhelming. If my child doesn't get into IB or a Magnet School, I want to know that all schools are going to be academically challenging and my student will be ready for college when he graduates. – *WPS Parent*

Implement AVID strategies schoolwide, including college visits. – *WPS Student*

More opportunities than just college focus - other programs/certifications – *WPS Student*

We heard to accomplish those outcomes we will need to...

SUPPORT THE WHOLE CHILD

BEHAVIOR intervention!! You cannot get to the academic until you deal with the discipline. It is keeping teachers from teaching and students from learning. – *WPS Employee*

If we care about these kids now, they will have a better opportunity to grow into productive members of society. They are the future of schools, governments, as well as the future of our families. We need to invest (every one of us) in this future. – *WPS Parent*

I believe each school needs more support staff to juggle the time constraints of handling students who are affected by trauma. Teachers are professionals at delivering content, but juggling that plus the stress of managing high trauma classrooms is too much. – *WPS Teacher*

INVEST IN STAFF

I think the district needs to offer more opportunities for teachers to grow as educators. We need to be able to attend conferences that allow networking and professional development opportunities. – *WPS Teacher*

If the teachers are well cared for, compensated fairly, and not overworked, they will take care of the classroom. True innovation and thinking outside of the box should be encouraged, acknowledged, and celebrated! – *WPS Teacher*

Keep building morale - be visible, supportive – *WPS Employee*

ENGAGE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY AS PARTNERS

Raise public support, corporate and foundation funding to meet resource gaps and grow programs to create positive outcomes for students. Strategic partnerships in the community to support initiatives that provide a win-win situation for all involved. – *WPS Parent*

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ENGAGE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY AS PARTNERS *(Continued)*

More (REAL) collaborative partnerships with the community to build supportive systems of care that reach out of the school to insure success for the kids at home, in school and in the community.
– *Community member*

COMMUNICATE TO BUILD TRUST

I believe WPS should highlight their successes in a public forum. It seems the only news that is shared is often the bad news. WPS does some wonderful things that more than just the parents of students should hear about. – *WPS Parent*

Use all ways to communicate, keep the variety because one person's best may be different than others. – *WPS Parent*

Come out and visit us. Give out positive praise. Rejoice in teacher accomplishments. – *WPS Teacher*

ALIGN RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

We need to increase the technology in every classroom and in the teachers hands. This is both in the form of hardware and software. Students need the technology today in order to lead us into the future. – *WPS Teacher*

I've been using outdated textbooks and my own money to make my classroom a welcoming and safe environment for my students. Our technology is outdated, and my textbooks are falling apart. My classroom furniture has seen better days, and it doesn't support 21st learning such as grouping and collaboration. – *WPS Teacher*

Need a smart budget to address needs at building (with additional funds) - *WPS Employee*

DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

