



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AS A RESULT OF THE
SMALL GROUP WORK ACTIVITY
SESSION #1

FEBRUARY 1, 2016 • FREMD HIGH SCHOOL
FEBRUARY 2, 2016 • SCHAUMBURG HIGH SCHOOL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement is a citizen-facilitated process designed to build two-way communication between the community at-large and the school district in order to provide feedback for the Board of Education. The Community Engagement Sessions offer a platform for both sharing information and gathering the community's input regarding targeted strategic topic areas. Each Session includes an informational presentation followed by a collaborative small group work time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION #1

Over 400 participants attended and signed the participant list during the first *211 of Tomorrow* community engagement sessions on February 1 & 2, 2016. However, the total number of attendees and participants was known to be greater given some community members, the facilitating Team members, some Board of Education members, and some District administrators did not sign the participant sheet.

The facilitating co-chairs rotated duties at each of the *211 of Tomorrow* sessions, and launched the community engagement project sharing the team's commitment to facilitating a positive conversation and collaborative process. Superintendent Dr. Daniel Cates presented information about District 211 — "The State of the District." The presentation is available [here](#). Then, Co-Chairs took turns introducing the small group work activities and participants collaborated in a total of 58 small groups between the two nights to complete the three tasks listed above. The following information is a summary of the responses from the groups as well as a small number of individual responses.

TASK #1: CELEBRATE • SURPRISE • CONCERN

CELEBRATE

Take some time to discuss with members of your group about what High School District 211 is doing right — what are we proud of?

GREATEST SURPRISE

Based on the information provided in the presentation, what were the greatest surprises among your group members?

GREATEST CONCERN

What concerns your group the most?

TASK #2: WHAT SHOULD A DISTRICT 211 GRADUATE LOOK LIKE?

Take 15 minutes to discuss with members of your group what you think a District 211 graduate should look like in the year 2021.

- What skills should they have?
- What health and wellness factors are important?
- What technology skills should they have?
- What kind of jobs should we prepare them for?

TASK #3: STRATEGIC TOPIC AREAS - QUESTIONS • ISSUES • OPPORTUNITIES

There are three strategic topic areas scheduled to be examined in the upcoming Community Engagement workshop series. To make those sessions most relevant to you, we need you to tell us the key **questions, issues and opportunities** that should be addressed in each of these sessions.

TASK #1: CELEBRATE • SURPRISE • CONCERN

CELEBRATE

Participants at the first *211 of Tomorrow* community engagement session identified several items they believe are sources of pride for District 211. Groups shared a high level of overall satisfaction with the District in key areas including curriculum, extracurricular activities, teacher and District staff quality, and finances. Groups recorded phrases like the following to indicate pride in District 211: “Wide offering of classes & programs;” “Sports/clubs=variety makes it impossible not to find something to connect with;” “Proud of teachers-genuine care of students;” “Strong academics, well-educated graduates;” “Supportive/caring environment;” “Student-centered decision-making”, and “District is cost-effective.”

Above anything else, comments related to the **curriculum** of District 211 schools were noted as a point of celebration from 29 of 58 groups. Groups listed items such as the quality programming, academic rigor, and variety of curriculum.

Participants also celebrated the **extracurricular opportunities** provided to students through sports, activities, and clubs. Many comments were included regarding the number of options available as well as the variety of opportunities offered. Groups listed programs such as music, arts, sports, and clubs among the offerings for District 211 students.

Another source of pride listed by participants was **the quality of the teachers and District 211 staff**. Fourteen groups and one individual listed this aspect of the school district as a celebration. One group noted, “Teacher/student relationships” while another celebrated that “Teachers are well educated/supportive of students.”

GREATEST SURPRISE

Without question, the high number of **homeless students** surprised a significant number of groups as well as a number of individual respondents. Further, 28 of 58 groups and five individuals indicated the District's increasing levels of poverty, as indicated by the **free/reduced lunch program** or the federal meal program as their

greatest surprise along with 22 of 58 tables also listing the **changing demographics** as a surprise.

While not a majority, a smaller group of tables noted the **cost per student** as a surprise. One group commented, “Cost per pupil so low and great resources!” while another said, “Huge cost to educate.”

GREATEST CONCERN

The top area of concern focused on **the impact of state funding**. Several groups, 20 of 58 total tables, expressed concern about the impact the state budget crisis will have on the school district. One group identified the concern for the “Anticipation of less help from the state;” while another group noted, “Economics of state & impact local education and trickle down on electives ‘extras’.”

The second most mentioned area of concern were topics associated with **social-emotional wellness** such as preparation for emotional issues of students today, the concern regarding the challenges students face due to the “pressure of course work, extracurricular, etc.” Groups mentioned balance, intensity, and stress levels associated with academics and sports/clubs as concerns.

Issues related to **technology** were also commonly listed as an area of concern. Groups listed items such as “Technology distraction-poor focus skills” as well as issues specifically related to iPads.

TASK #2: WHAT SHOULD A DISTRICT 211 GRADUATE LOOK LIKE?

Participants at the community engagement sessions listed various skills, health and wellness factors, and technology skills that District 211 students should have upon graduation. First and foremost, participants overwhelmingly identified topics associated with **social-emotional well-being**. Fifty-four groups and four individual respondents said social-emotional skills such as self-confidence, learning to work collaboratively in team environment, social skills, personal responsibility as it relates to their character, and being well-rounded are important for graduates of District 211. One group said students “need to learn how to pick themselves up after a loss and keep moving forward to the next challenge” while another group noted “Independence-self advocate” as an important characteristic.

Comments related to **career skills** were listed by 32 of 58 tables as well as by two individuals. Participants indicated a desire for both college and vocational options while in high school to prepare students for their futures. One group noted, “Graduates that do not have college plans should be prepared for the work force” while another said “Skills that are able to provide the students with options in the job market.”

Technology skills and related comments also were listed by a high number of groups, 34 out of 58 as well as one individual, as important for District 211 graduates. From software/applications and innovative thinking/development to basic computer skills, participants felt these types of skills are necessary for students’ futures.

Aspects related to **communication skills** were also identified as important. Communication with others through verbal interactions, presentations, and written

communications were all listed as part of this recommended skillset. Some groups specifically identified “face-to-face” interactions while one individual response noted “In a global society-students need to work well in collaborative setting & not just by themselves.”

TASK #3: STRATEGIC TOPIC AREAS - QUESTIONS • ISSUES • OPPORTUNITIES

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

Many of the comments listed by the various groups related to academic programming focused on aspects related to **career preparation and internships**. Participants communicated their interest in further development of vocational skills such as manufacturing skills, industrial skills as well as internships for students providing the opportunity to explore career options before they leave high school. Other ideas expressed a desire for more information about current resources & programs like “college career pathways” and “Harper’s Promise.”

Participants repeatedly mentioned topics related to **life skills**. Several groups identified personal finances as a topic to address with one group saying, “How to live on your own, insurance.”

Another area of interest for the community engagement session on academic programming is **college preparation**. Items such as financial aid, raising college awareness earlier as well as preparing students for the academic expectations they will face were mentioned.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT & WELLNESS

As previously expressed by many groups, **social emotional skills** are of particular interest to the participants. Groups again stated their interest or asked questions about social-emotional skills and learning. One group said, “Many high school students suffer from depression. How can we teach kids to cope?” while another said, “Make sure we are able to keep offering support for social-emotional needs.”

As noted in the celebrations, the opportunities for student involvement are numerous in District 211. When thinking of items related to student involvement, several groups included questions or comments related to **intramurals and/or clubs** for this topic area. A number of groups indicated an interest in more opportunities for “no cut” or “less demanding” activities. One group questioned, “How to reach [the students] who are not getting involved? There are clubs can/should be added.”

FINANCES & FACILITIES

Participants noted the strength of the District 211 financial landscape as a positive. The most frequently asked question regarding finances was how **changes in state funding** may impact the financial health of the school district. One group asked, “Given future state cutbacks, how do we prepare to maintain quality with less money?” Groups also were interested in transparency of the District’s budget.

Groups noted the quality facilities and how well they are cared for while also wondering about **future capital investments and improvements**. Some groups mentioned various athletic fields and facilities need attention, while a number of groups also suggested investigating a fieldhouse. Groups also wondered what types of plans are in place for future facility improvements.

TASK #3: OTHER SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to share additional suggestions for the *211 of Tomorrow* community engagement program. The groups offered varied suggestions for the Facilitating Team. Ideas related to topics such as additional opportunities to celebrate student success, class rank, solutions for homeless families, and additional vocational programs were listed.

**For a complete listing of all responses,
see the CES-1 Verbatim Response Documents for February 1 and 2 found at
<http://adc.d211.org/communityengagement/>**