

## **Comprehensive Planning Committee - Staff Engagement Summary - April 2026**

In April 2026, PSD staff were asked to provide feedback to the Comprehensive Planning Committee, the district, and the Board of Education regarding how best to engage staff as the comprehensive planning effort moves forward. Below is the summary of feedback gathered from an all staff survey, which received 67 responses, and three in-person community engagement sessions, which were attended by approximately 90 PSD staff members.

### **What are some ways to keep staff informed through the comprehensive planning process?**

**1. Email is the primary tool—but it needs to be done well.**

Most respondents prefer regular email updates, but with specific expectations: keep them clear, concise, and timely, avoid jargon, and highlight key points (often with bullet summaries). Separate emails dedicated to this topic are preferred over updates in general newsletters.

**2. Consistency and frequency matter.**

Staff want predictable, ongoing communication—weekly or monthly updates, even when there’s no major news. Regular updates help reduce anxiety and prevent rumors.

**3. Transparency and honesty are critical.**

There’s a strong call for clear explanations of decisions, criteria, data, and timelines, along with honest communication about challenges—not just final decisions. Many emphasized sharing the “why” behind decisions and providing access to underlying data.

**4. Clear timelines and early notification.**

Staff want defined timelines, key milestones, and advance notice—especially before information is released publicly or in the media. Impacted staff should hear first and have time to process.

**5. Multiple communication channels are needed.**

While email is central, staff recognize it’s easy to miss. They suggest reinforcing messages through videos, meetings, websites, social media, texts, and staff meetings to ensure broader reach.

**6. Face-to-face communication and local leadership involvement.**

In-person meetings, especially for affected schools, are highly valued. Staff

want district leaders—not just principals—to communicate major decisions, with opportunities for dialogue and questions.

**7. Centralized and accessible information.**

A single, easy-to-navigate hub (like a website) with updates, timelines, FAQs, and meeting summaries is important, ideally linked in emails.

**8. Two-way communication and feedback loops.**

Staff want opportunities to ask questions, give input, and see how feedback is used, through surveys, meetings, or designated representatives.

**9. Alignment and consistency across messengers.**

Communication should be coordinated between district leadership and school administrators so all staff receive the same, accurate information and messaging.

**Summary:** Staff are asking for frequent, transparent, and well-coordinated communication delivered through multiple channels, with email as the backbone—supported by clear timelines, honest explanations, and meaningful opportunities for engagement.

## What would a successful process for staff look like?

### 1. **Transparent**, clear, and honest process

The most consistent theme is the need for full transparency:

- Clear criteria for decisions (why schools/staff are impacted)
- Open sharing of data, costs, and tradeoffs
- Honest communication about what is and isn't changeable
- No surprises or learning information from the media first

Staff want a step-by-step, well-defined process with shared vocabulary and expectations.

### 2. **Defined timelines and early communication**

A successful process includes:

- Clear timelines and milestones from the start
- Early notification (well before public announcements or hiring cycles)
- Enough time for staff to process, plan, and seek other opportunities if needed
- Alignment with key dates (hiring, school choice, budgeting)

Uncertainty and last-minute decisions were major concerns.

### 3. **Meaningful staff involvement and voice**

Staff want to be actively included—not just informed:

- Opportunities to give input throughout the process
- Clear explanation of how feedback is used
- Representation from all schools and roles
- Ability to propose solutions, not just react

There's also a desire for clarity on when input is being gathered vs. when decisions are final.

### 4. **Strong, consistent communication**

Success requires:

- Frequent, concise updates
- Consistent messaging across district and school leaders

- Clear “source of truth” for information
- Opportunities for two-way communication (Q&A, feedback loops)

Communication should be proactive, not reactive, and reduce rumors and anxiety.

## **5. Respectful, human-centered approach**

Staff emphasized the emotional impact and want the process to:

- Treat people with respect, dignity, and empathy
- Include face-to-face communication, especially for impacted staff
- Provide time and space to grieve, process, and transition
- Offer mental health and emotional support

How decisions are communicated is just as important as the decisions themselves.

## **6. Job security, clarity, and fair placement**

A successful process protects staff as much as possible:

- Efforts to retain jobs and minimize layoffs
- Clear, fair processes for placement, transfers, and overages
- Transparency around seniority vs. merit, roles, and expectations
- Advance clarity on whether staff must reapply or will be placed

Staff also want choice and alignment in placements (grade level, culture, role).

## **7. Thoughtful transition and logistics**

Beyond decisions, staff care about how transitions happen:

- Clear plans for moving, packing, and timelines
- Support and resources (time, materials, compensation if needed)
- Early identification of new roles, locations, and leadership
- Organized onboarding into new schools

Logistical clarity reduces stress and confusion.

## **8. Preserving community, culture, and programs**

Many emphasized maintaining what works:

- Keeping staff and student groups together where possible

- Preserving school identity, culture, and special programs
- Honoring school history (celebrations, memorials, traditions)
- Building a new, shared identity when schools merge

The goal is to avoid fragmenting communities.

## 9. Equity and student-centered decision-making

A successful process:

- Prioritizes what's best for students
- Ensures equitable decisions (not disproportionately impacting certain schools or populations)
- Considers access, transportation, demographics, and programming
- Avoids creating “gaps” in community access to schools

## 10. Decisive and efficient execution

While input is valued, many stressed:

- Avoiding overly drawn-out processes that increase stress
- Making decisions, standing by them, and moving forward
- Balancing thoroughness with timeliness (“rip the band-aid off”)

## 11. Building trust

Underlying everything is trust:

- Acknowledging past mistakes
- Following through on commitments
- Demonstrating that leadership is listening and acting on feedback

A successful process is one that rebuilds confidence in leadership, not erodes it further.

**Summary:** Staff define success as a process that is transparent, timely, inclusive, and humane—one that clearly explains decisions, genuinely involves staff, minimizes harm, and thoughtfully supports people through change while keeping student needs at the center.

**What are some ways staff can stay unified as a district — rather than divided by school or group — as school closures and consolidations are considered?**

**1. Trust, Transparency, and Clear Communication Are Foundational**

- Staff consistently emphasized the need for clear, consistent, and frequent communication.
- Unity depends on understanding the “why,” criteria, and timeline behind decisions.
- Decisions should be data-driven and non-personal, with transparent criteria applied system-wide.
- Once decisions are made, leadership should stick to them and shift focus to support and implementation.
- Lack of clarity fuels rumors, fear, and division.

**2. Shift from Competition to Collective Identity**

- Many noted that past processes (and systems like school choice) have created a competitive culture between schools.
- There is a strong desire to move toward a district-wide mindset (“we” vs. “us vs. them”).
- Messaging should emphasize:
  - District-wide benefits for students
  - Shared responsibility and impact
  - “Building something new together,” not one school absorbing another

**3. Focus on Positive Outcomes and Shared Gains**

- Staff want messaging to highlight what is gained, not just what is lost:
  - Expanded programming (e.g., specials, STEM, intervention support)
  - More sustainable staffing and services
- Framing consolidations as opportunities to improve student experience helps reduce defensiveness and competition.

**4. Intentional Relationship-Building and Collaboration**

- Unity requires proactive relationship-building across schools, not just after decisions.
- Suggested strategies include:
  - Joint professional development and workdays
  - Cross-school collaboration before and after consolidation
  - Staff visits to each other’s classrooms
  - Opportunities for students and families to connect
- Trust grows when people know each other and work together.

## **5. Create a New Shared Identity**

- Consolidations should feel like mergers, not takeovers.
- Ideas included:
  - New school names, mascots, and traditions
  - Blending the best parts of each school's culture
- Preserving legacy while creating something new helps reduce feelings of loss and "winners vs. losers."

## **6. Provide Clarity and Fairness in Staffing Processes**

- A major source of anxiety is job security and placement.
- Staff want:
  - Clear, detailed processes for overages, RIFs, hiring, and transfers
  - Opportunities to share preferences or have some choice
  - Assurance of fair and equitable treatment across roles (licensed, classified, admin)
- Uncertainty in staffing decisions is a key driver of division.

## **7. Acknowledge Emotional Impact and Provide Support**

- Many described this as a grief process involving loss, fear, and identity shifts.
- Unity requires:
  - Time and space to process
  - Emotional and logistical support (e.g., counseling, help with transitions)
  - Grace in expectations for impacted schools
- Ignoring emotions leads to resistance and mistrust.

## **8. Engage Staff and Community as Partners**

- Staff want to feel heard and involved, not that decisions are predetermined.
- Ongoing opportunities for input, Q&A, and dialogue are important.
- Community partners and families should also be included to reinforce a shared effort.

## **9. Plan for Implementation and Transitions Early**

- Unity is strengthened when people know what happens next immediately after decisions.
- Clear next steps, timelines, and supports reduce chaos and competition.
- Planning should include:
  - Transition supports
  - Use of closed buildings
  - Long-term vision for the district

## 10. Recognize Systemic Challenges to Unity

- Some responses acknowledged that full unity may be difficult due to:
  - Job loss fears
  - Historical mistrust
  - Existing inequities and competition
- However, most agreed unity can be improved through intentional leadership, fairness, and communication.

**Summary:** Unity is less about forcing agreement and more about building trust through transparency, fairness, shared purpose, and relationships. When staff understand the rationale, feel supported, and are included in building what comes next, the process shifts from competition to collaboration.