



Community Conversations Report

July 2021 – April 2022

Made possible by the generous donation of time and talents by our Board of Directors with support by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Smith Family Foundation, as well as local businesses and individual donors who support our mission to advance the role of families and communities in securing a high quality public education for each child in Pitt County.

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Report by Kylene Dibble, MSW, Executive Director
Assisted by Meghan Stello, BSW Intern

Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County
P.O. Box 2873
Greenville NC 27836
(252) 758-1604 ext. 201

PPS Pitt County is a chapter of the national organization, Parents for Public Schools, Inc.

Executive Summary

Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County (“PPS-PC”) is a nonprofit organization comprised of more than 4,000 Pitt County parents, grandparents and community members who share the belief that families and communities play an important role in securing a high quality public education for each child. Founded in 2013, PPS-PC actively pursues community engagement in public education through three major initiatives: Community Conversations, School Tours, and the Parent Engagement Program. This report provides an annual summary and analysis of the data collected from our 2021-2022 Community Conversations program.

Community Conversations are structured discussions of public school topics designed to solicit community perceptions and opinions about public education in Pitt County. From July 2021 to April 2022, PPS-PC convened 16 Community Conversation sessions with 189 participants representing a wide variety of Pitt County residents.

Conversations were offered to each attendance area, as well as to other community groups. Each attendance area had the opportunity to participate in both virtual and face-to-face conversations. While virtual and in person conversations were held on separate nights, each attendance area was counted as one conversation.

At each Community Conversation, facilitators posed five discussion questions and then carefully recorded all participants’ comments, both in direct response to the questions and as a part of the general discussions that ensued. To further encourage honest and complete commentary, all 16 groups of Community Conversation participants were also invited to provide anonymous written responses if they chose to do so. Demographics of the participants were collected by PPS-PC facilitators to the best of their ability and are reflective of the diversity of Pitt County.

Participants in the Community Conversations varied widely in their relationship to public education. Some participants had children in public schools, while others were public school staff members or were both parents and staff, and still others were community members who had varying levels of connection to public education. All 189 participants chose to participate in the Community Conversations knowing that the topic was public education in Pitt County and that results would be shared with the school district. This suggested a widespread vested interest in public education among a variety of stakeholders in Pitt County and a desire to engage with the school district.

The following are key highlights based on the views and opinions expressed by the 2021-2022 Community Conversation participants.



**Word Cloud generated from our
2021-2022 Community**

Accolades

Consistent with previous years, accolades for Pitt County Schools continued to be quite strong. There were positive comments regarding safety, both as it related to COVID-19 as well as general safety. Participants seemed pleased with the quality of the staff and administrators and noted their extra efforts and displays of teamwork over the course of this past school year with appreciation. Comments were made about opportunities for students to experience support in a variety of ways, including COVID-19 recovery, resources for college and career planning, connecting to community resources and extracurricular options, among other topics.

Positive comments were also made about communication from Pitt County Schools, with many positive mentions of the frequency and the variety of communication media delivered to participants. Equity and diversity came up as participants reflected upon what is going well with the schools. Some participants also mentioned nutrition and meals as a positive aspect of public schools. Other comments focused on the positive way that PCS helps students connect to opportunities in the community at large.

Concerns

The most common concern mentioned in this year's Community Conversations is not a new one, but one that appeared more prominently this year: a desire from parents and the community for "more." This included a desire for more resources, more support for teachers and staff, more funding for teacher salaries, more bus drivers, more staff consistency (less staff turnover), more available technology, more support for Exceptional Children students, and an overall focus on more support.

Some comments in this portion of the conversations referred to the curriculum, with a variety of concerns relating to what elements of curriculum are offered (or not) at each school. Comments included a need for more challenging curriculum, as well as an increased variety of curriculum choices that reflect life skills and future planning. Comments were made about the need for facilities to be well maintained, with the thought being expressed that physical spaces are an important element of the learning environment, and that staff are better able to serve students when facilities are created and maintained with both staff and students in mind. Student behavior came up in this portion of the conversations as an issue that needs to be addressed.

While we heard positive comments about communication between PCS and parents, some comments were made regarding a need for even more communication, particularly in a variety of forms. Parent engagement was addressed with comments indicating that parents want to volunteer in the schools, and that they also want to be aware of what their children are learning on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, especially since these conversations began in July 2021, COVID-19 was a concern that was mentioned by some participants, referring to concerns about the virus itself, masks, learning gaps, and lost opportunities like field trips. Funding was brought up in this section, with the idea

expressed that increased funding leads to increased services and opportunities in our schools.

Another topic that emerged prominently throughout the conversations was that of more support needed for students. Participants spoke about the need for additional student resources, mentioning physical, mental, academic, and social resources, as well as more support for staff. Equity and diversity also came up some throughout the conversations, including a range of issues from teacher recruitment and retention to teacher support, to opportunities available to children, to level of parent connection, and more.

Some concerns related to geographical challenges. Specifically, participants expressed concerns that educational experiences differed for students depending on which school in the county a student attends. This is a concern that has been voiced in years past as well. Some participants' concerns related to a desire for redistricting. The need for more social workers was also brought up, stressing that both students and staff would be better served with more social workers in the schools. This question also prompted a few comments about the need for a more varied and nutritious menu. Comments were also made that indicated a desire for more connection between parents/community members and the Board of Education.

Defining Equity

A new question was added in the 2021-2022 Community Conversations to learn what educational equity means to Pitt County community members and public school parents. We received a variety of responses and found common themes. Equity was spoken about as it relates to student needs and supports, with a focus on individualized learning and services for each student. Opportunity and access were brought up multiple times, with an emphasis on making sure that needed resources are available to each student, and removing any barriers that might keep students from utilizing those resources. Some who answered this question defined educational equity in terms of each child getting the resources, services, and interactions that match each child's specific needs. Additional curriculum was mentioned, particularly as a supplement to current curriculum, with mentions about field trips, life skills, and elective courses all entering the conversation. Comments were also made about the need for students to feel accepted no matter their circumstance.

Some participants spoke about resource and opportunity allocation, with a focus on schools as individualized entities when assessing and meeting needs, which often led to discussions of resource allocation between schools. Staff supports and training were spoken about, with thoughts expressed about increased teacher training resulting in those teachers being better able to identify the specific needs of each student and having knowledge about what resources might be available for each student. It was recognized that educational equity not only falls on schools, but the community, and comments were made expressing gratitude for community engagement as well as a desire for more community/school connections. Geographical issues were also discussed when this question was asked, with a theme being that there is a difference in resources and programming from one area of the county to another. Technology and internet were also

mentioned by a few participants, noting that barriers still exist for some staff and students trying to access technology and internet.

Experiences of Marginalized Groups

As participants shared comments about being part of one or more marginalized groups, there were quite a range of responses, with a variety of statements about feeling included or excluded based on various areas of identity or intersectionality. The largest category of responses related to examples that people shared about how they have experienced education in Pitt County Schools based on their race, having exceptional children, the child or family being part of the LGBTQ+ community, or having cultural or religious differences. Comments supported trainings for teachers that would help make teachers more equipped to deal with a variety of diverse issues relating to marginalized groups.

Comments also indicated that it is important to families that students feel represented in the classroom, the schools, and the student body, and to see themselves reflected in teachers and staff. This question led to comments that placed an emphasis on the importance of high quality teachers in all situations. Some participants made statements that brought geographical location into the list of marginalized groups and indicated a need for schools in less populated and/or affluent areas to have access to resources that would help them thrive. There were some comments that specifically indicated a need for more support for those students who do not speak English as a first language.

Comments in response to this question once again pointed to varying resources being available from one school to another, leaving some students in these populations without needed resources. Some comments fell into a category of student supports, highlighting the voices of those who have had positive experiences in which their child did receive services or equitable treatment. Comments also placed an emphasis on how social workers often support students who might identify as part of marginalized communities.

Anything Else

The final Community Conversation question is quite open ended and does not have a guiding topic. It is simply, “anything else?” The topics that come up in response to this question have a wide range. The main topics that arose this year fell primarily into the categories of curriculum and extracurricular activities. Some of the comments suggested that extracurricular activities and topics could sometimes be included as part of the curriculum during the school day, as “real-life” or hands-on learning. Once again, there was advocacy for more staff, more support for the staff that are in place, more opportunities for staff to have a voice at the decision-making table, and more training for teachers that would leave them better equipped to meet the needs of each student. Parent engagement came up a few times during this question and led to conversations not just about engagement in classrooms, but about parents becoming a part of school teams and playing the role of public education advocates.

As comments inevitably involved the intrusion of COVID-19 into the educational process in the past year, there were both positive and negative comments about how COVID-19 has been handled in the schools. This same question also revealed other safety concerns not related to COVID-19, but more along the lines of keeping students safe in school buildings. School meals came up a few times in response to this question, and focused on the need for larger portion sizes, more nutritious options, and more awareness of how parents and schools can communicate in order to accommodate allergy needs. While the dress code was not an overwhelming issue among the answers to this question, there were some comments about a need for more lenient dress code options, and a desire for consistency from school to school regarding the dress code.

Various thoughts about problematic student behaviors and how to address them were brought up in a few comments. There were comments in this section about internet accessibility related to geographical location of students. Additionally, the need for more bus drivers, higher pay for Teacher Assistant bus drivers, and increased afterschool transportation options were discussed. A few participants answered this question with thoughts about equity and representation, mostly focusing on the need for students to feel seen, heard, and represented by teachers, in curriculum, and with their peers.

Some comments were made suggesting an increased need for connections between staff, students, parents, and community members as a way of better supporting students. Communication was spoken about and the message was clear: open, timely and frequent communication from all levels of PCS (classroom, principal, and district), through all forms of media is desired and appreciated by parents. There was one comment about a concern for the amount of virtual learning still required, and another concern stated about the lack of internet access for some students as compared to others. One comment expressed appreciation of the Community Conversations format as a means to provide feedback to PCS.

Most participants in the 2021-2022 Community Conversations had never participated in discussions of this nature and were grateful for the opportunity to share their thoughts and suggestions on our local public schools. PPS-PC believes that all stakeholders should be part of the ongoing conversation in our community about our public schools, and we are honored to provide a bridge of communication between these Pitt County residents and our public education leaders at PCS. We hope the ideas and opinions voiced herein will be considered in efforts to improve our schools. Our goal, together with education leaders, parents, community members and other stakeholders, is to help all students reach their full potential by making Pitt County Schools the preferred educational choice in Pitt County.

Recommendations Based on 2021-2022 Community Conversations

Our community feels empowered when their voices are delivered to key educational decision makers in the district. They trust that their suggestions for improvement will be valued as a resource for educational leaders when decisions are being made that affect our community's students and families. PPS-PC leaders make clear at each Community Conversation that the goal is not to create a list of demands for the public schools, and we know that not every concern highlighted in this report can be immediately addressed. Our hope is that this Community Conversation report is seen as a guide and a tool that can be one form of bringing parent and community voices to the decision-making table. With that in mind, and in response to PCS' direct request that we do so, PPS-PC respectfully makes the following suggestions and recommendations based on the 2021-2022 Community Conversations.

Accolades

The largest number of comments about what is going well in PCS schools related to COVID-19 and safety. Even as we noted varied safety issues being raised, they often related back to COVID-19 and participants' overall approval of PCS' handling of the challenges presented by COVID-19 during the past year. We are hopeful that as our world begins to live with COVID-19 and has more knowledge from the medical community about how to handle this pandemic, the "normalcy" of procedures and best practices responding to COVID-19 in public school settings will naturally become more widely accepted.

Parents greatly appreciated the timely and continued communications from PCS, through a variety of media, on important issues such as COVID-19. We encourage schools and parents to continue to increase their open and transparent communication with one another in an effort to create the kind of unity and teamwork that will increase student success. Also, parents would greatly appreciate continued communication from PCS regarding available resources for college and career planning, connecting to community resources, and extracurricular options.

Concerns

Adequate support for staff in our schools was the top concern mentioned by participants. It is worth noting that this concern was brought up multiple times throughout the community conversations, in response to multiple questions. Comments indicated that staff need more support in a number of ways: increased pay, increased staff, and increased staff with specialized skills (such as EC teachers as well as staff who are able to provide translation services). It is also important to note that while comments very clearly focused on more support of teachers, increased support to other staff such as interpreters, bus drivers, custodial staff and social workers was brought up as well.

Understanding that increased support at all levels is often a matter of funding and that funding is an issue dependent upon many state and local entities, including our local Board of Education, we support parents' continued advocacy for increased public education funding at every level, both local and statewide. We also encourage current public school decision makers to support teachers and families through less tangible ways, such as providing more options for staff to

vocalize their needs. Additionally, creative thought around how and where to advertise open positions for teachers and staff when funding makes such positions possible might help fill those positions.

To address concerns about the perceived inequities between schools on issues such as curriculum or facilities, we encourage continued open communication between staff and families. Particularly at the more rural schools in the county, such communication is critical to better understand perceptions and experiences as they differ from schools in more populated areas of the county. To ensure that the dynamics of these and other issues are clearly communicated to parents, one option would be to offer more videos from PCS on a variety of topics. Videos could also be used to alert parents to coming changes and to remind them about changes as they happen across the district. Parents indicated that this was a positive way for them to better understand changes and expectations, in addition to written communication, electronic communication and phone calls. Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County is happy to help with Q&A sessions and is able to convert such sessions into YouTube viewing options that can be shared with the schools and the public. In addition to this type of ongoing communication through media, parents should soon have more opportunities to interact with the schools in person as COVID-19 restrictions decrease, which will naturally increase direct communication between stakeholders.

Participants also indicated a desire to get to know members of the Board of Education, so continued communication through various media would be welcomed in this area as well. PPS-PC would be happy to assist with BOE meet and greet sessions, create “get to know you” videos with the BOE members, and share information with our members about how to best communicate with BOE members. PPS-PC plans to continue its “Meet the Board of Education Candidates” forum this fall to allow parents to hear candidates for the Board of Education express their views on a variety of educational issues.

As far as addressing the call from parents for more support of staff in the PCS system, addressing these concerns goes hand-in-hand with continued advocacy from all stakeholders for more funding. Again, we encourage parents to advocate at county and state levels for additional funding that would support increased services for students, as well as improved facilities. For example, adding more social work positions would increase student supports, and when students are more fully supported, they are better able to perform at their best academic level. Additionally, school and community brainstorming around recruiting for applicants for positions that are fully funded is necessary as we see a national decrease in individuals entering a career in the field of education. Increased communication between parents and schools is encouraged in order to make parents more aware of the services that already exist in the PCS system, and to remove any possible stigma for using these services.

Defining Equity

This question was asked to better understand how equity is perceived in educational settings across Pitt County. While some responses included a definition, other responses were derived from the conversations that this question sparked. The comment that seemed to appear most was

that when thinking about student needs and supports, equity meant focusing on individualized learning for each child. Suggestions for achieving equity included removing barriers that might keep some students from accessing resources that are available to them. Before removing such barriers, it would be important for school personnel, at all levels, to gain a better understanding of the various types of barriers that may impact student success. Some are mentioned in this report, but others may be identified by building relationships with individual students as their needs, barriers, and appropriate resources are determined.

Curriculum came up in the conversations a few times during the course of discussing this question. Parents had suggestions about curriculum including information that might enhance student learning within the core curriculum. Thoughts were shared about field trips enhancing core learning, and parents wondered if learning life skills could be interwoven in core learning. Additionally, there was interest in having more varied elective courses for students to choose from and making sure that students at all schools have access to those courses. There was also a lot of discussion that the district needs to think about equity from not just a student perspective, but also a school perspective. That is, each school can be viewed as an individual entity, and one school may need very different resources than another. Participants suggested that schools should each be given what they need in order for their students to thrive, recognizing that one school has very different needs from another school.

Comments that were shared about staff support and training indicated that one way for teachers to be more inclusive of each student in their classroom would be to attend trainings that help them better understand the culture and needs of various students in their classrooms. These trainings could be provided by the district, or by other entities. The key suggestion around this topic would be for the school district to make sure teachers are aware of trainings available to them and support the attendance of any training that enhances a teacher's ability to more fully include each child in their classroom.

Experiences of Marginalized Groups

The number one type of response we received to this question included specific anecdotal examples. There were examples of families who felt that their children were included and valued as they brought a different culture or unique lens to the classroom. Conversely, there were also comments indicating that students and families who are part of a marginalized group felt less valued and heard in the classroom. The greatest recommendation we have for continuing the positive experiences and decreasing the negative experiences is once again in relation to staff training. When staff are more informed about the unique needs of their students based on their specific differences or their association with one or more marginalized groups, staff will better understand how to be inclusive towards these unique students and their peers. Once again, trainings do not have to be administered by Pitt County Schools, but staff might have more of an opportunity to attend if they are aware of these training opportunities because the school system not only shares the information, but also creates ways for the teachers to attend (paying training fees, travel fees, providing substitute teachers, etc.).

Additionally, schools can increase their efforts to increase representation of marginalized groups through the opportunity for students to see themselves represented in books, curriculum, teachers, staff, and their peers. This may not mean immediately adding new media, programs or staff, but instead looking at what already exists within PCS and making sure it is accurate and equitably allocated. Also, intentional efforts should be made to ensure that students in marginalized populations feel included, valued, heard, and represented. Once again, the need to increase resources in schools in less populated areas arose. We recognize this is not an easy “fix” and would recommend that the district be intentional about identifying any gaps or barriers that may exist in these schools and communities. Once identified, the district could begin to look at PCS assets that could supplement already provided services in order to bring more equitable conditions and services to schools across the district.

Additional Comments/Suggestions

As participants were asked if anything else came to mind that they would like to share about their experience with PCS, curriculum and extracurricular activities rose to the top, often intertwined with one another. Suggestions were made to examine ways to improve curriculum, and to determine if it would be possible to incorporate extracurricular activities into the current school day and potentially even within curriculum standards. This would assist in making these learning experiences available for those students who may not be able to participate in these opportunities afterschool or otherwise in the community due to time, economic barriers, or transportation constraints.

On the issue of increased staff support and training, we recommend that wherever possible, more support is given to existing staff. This support can come in the form of monetary compensation, time for self-care, well spaced teacher workdays throughout the year, and the addition of more staff to assist current staff. Once again, parents and community members must participate in this effort by advocating to state and county decisionmakers to create funding opportunities that allow for more staff. Once funding is available, the school district can work to ensure that those opportunities are advertised to a wide range of potential applicants. We recognize that while funding is always a need, there is a new need across the nation for people who want to pursue educational careers and fill the open positions. As we look at all of the concerns represented in this question, it seems that each concern could be addressed if there were more staff, more support for current staff, and more funding for current and future staff salaries.

Parents for Public Schools Community Conversations Report

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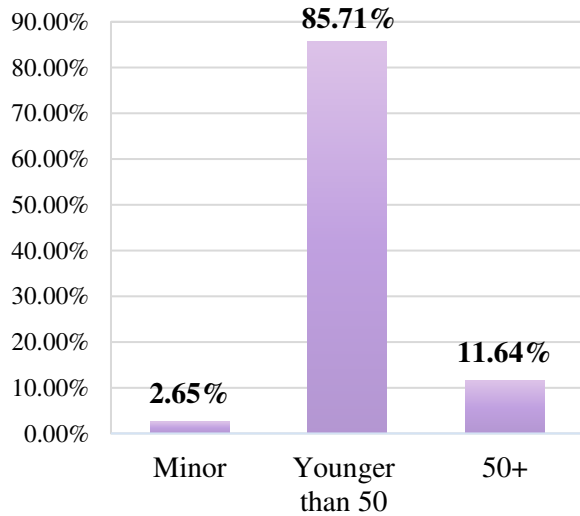
Methodology

PPS-PC conducted a series of Community Conversations in 2021-2022 with a wide variety of stakeholders interested in public education in Pitt County. PPS-PC was able to hold Community Conversations in person by following the CDC guidelines; however, due to a still existing pandemic, PPS-PC offered a virtual option through Zoom as well. PPS-PC offered each attendance area the opportunity to attend either an in person or a virtual Zoom community conversation. To ensure that all parents were given a chance to participate, PPS-PC staff and interns sent flyers with information for attending both the in person and the zoom conversation to each principal, and asked principals to distribute this information to each family in their school. Each principal was provided a flyer a week prior to the scheduled conversation to share with parents at their school in the ways that they best communicate with their families. Some principals chose to share the information in multiple ways (weekly phone calls, emails, social media, and more), while others chose one method of communication and shared it one time. Additionally, PPS-PC shared the information on their social media platforms multiple times the week before each conversation. While the advertising was meant to make sure every parent was invited to at least one conversation by targeting each attendance area, all participants were welcomed, and no participants were turned away regardless of attendance area status. The flyer stated where the conversation would be held, who it was for, and information about how to access the Zoom link. PPS-PC also remained willing to have community conversations with any community group that desired one and was willing to do this in person or via Zoom. These conversations varied in length from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, depending on the number of participants and level of participant feedback.

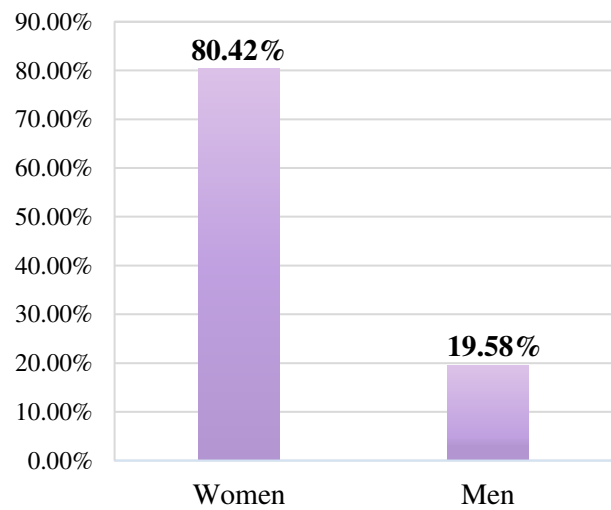
Sixteen Community Conversations were held between July 2021 and April 2022, with a total of 189 community members participating. The in-person conversation and the zoom conversation for each attendance area are counted as one conversation even though they were held on different nights. Each conversation was facilitated by two PPS staff members, interns, or volunteers, one of whom verbally facilitated the conversation, and the other of whom meticulously recorded participant comments. During in-person conversations, participants were given the option to give comments orally, or to write them on a printed document. During Zoom conversations, participants could orally respond or respond in the chat feature of the Zoom platform. Demographics of participants were collected visually by PPS facilitators to the best of their ability. Given that some of these conversations were held virtually, collecting demographic information was difficult as some participants chose to leave their cameras off during the conversation. The demographic information provided in this report reflects the best estimation and relies on visual observations and staff, interns, and volunteers reporting information to the best of their ability.

Sex/Race/Ethnicity/Age of 2021-22 Community Conversation Participants:

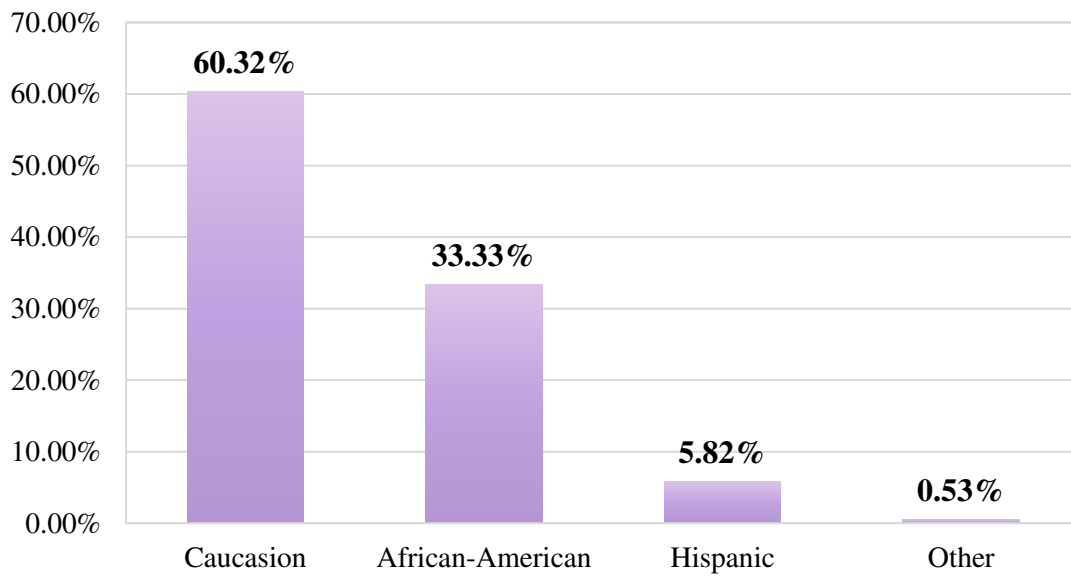
Age Range of Participants



Sex of Participants



Race/Ethnicity of Race of Participants



Community Conversation Events from July 2021 to April 2022

Community Group	Participants	Date
Horizons Parents (In-Person)	4	7/28/2021
North Pitt Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	7	10/5/2021 & 10/6/2021
Chamber Leadership Institute (In-Person)	25	11/10/2021
Farmville Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	4	11/16/2021 & 11/17/2021
Possessing the Keys Academy (PKOK) (In-Person)	9	12/13/2021
Developing Positive Attitudes Program (DPAP) (In-Person)	14	12/16/2021
South Central Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	9	1/31/2022 & 2/1/2022
Alpha Delta Kappa (In-Person & Virtual)	25	2/8/2022
EC Parents & Hispanic Families (In-Person)	4	2/17/2022
J.H. Rose Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	8	2/22/2022 & 2/24/2022
Ayden Grifton Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	4	3/23/2022 & 3/24/2022
Cedar Bridge Church (In-Person)	9	3/27/2022
BRACE (Virtual)	14	3/29/2022
DH Conley Attendance Area (In-Person & Virtual)	23	3/29/2022 & 3/30/2022
Building Hope Community Life Center (In-Person)	18	4/5/2022
Pitt County NCAE (Virtual)	12	4/21/2022
Total: 16	Participants: 189	Conversations: 16

Questions and Responses from 2021-22 Community Conversations

The questions asked of all participating groups were exactly the same. The wording for each question was as follows:

Community Conversation Questions

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?
2. What are the most pressing needs facing Pitt County Schools right now?
3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?
4. If you identify as someone who is part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ+, etc.), describe any praises or concerns you have about your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

Responses to the Community Conversation questions are grouped by category in this report to facilitate comparison. The categories are not mutually exclusive, as some participants' responses could fit into multiple categories. To address this each comment is put into a category it seemed to fit best with. Some participants responded both verbally during group discussion and in writing through direct communication with PPS staff members, creating the potential for overrepresentation of their comments.

Findings - Community Conversation Responses

Some of the questions generated more responses than others, and some generated a wider variety of responses than others. The second question, regarding the most pressing needs for Pitt County Schools generated the highest number (178) and fourth widest variety of unique responses (172). Question one, which asked participants about what Pitt County Schools was doing well, had the second highest number of responses (122) with the second widest variety responses (111). The third question asked what equity means to you in an educational context and generated 104 responses but had the third widest variety of responses (98). Question five, which asked participants if there was anything else they wanted to share, received the second lowest number of responses (94) with 82 unique responses. Question four, which asked about the experiences of individuals who identify as a marginalized population, received the lowest number of responses (92) with 92 unique responses.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Responses	122	178	104	92	94
Unique Responses	110	172	98	92	82

Question 1 - What are Pitt County schools doing really well?

This question was asked to all community groups. There were (110) different strengths identified in the (122) responses generated by this question. Responses have been grouped into nine categories: COVID-19/ Safety, Staffing, Student Support, Communication, Equity/ Diversity, Student Engagement, Nutrition/ School Meals, Community, and Other. The number of responses generated is indicated in parentheses for each category heading.

This year, COVID-19/ Safety was identified as the greatest strength of Pitt County Schools, generating (28) responses, with an array of favorable responses regarding the quality of staff enforcement of COVID-19 safety precautions. Pitt County Schools staff was seen as a key strength of Pitt County Schools, generating (24) responses, with a fondness for the adaptability and high quality educational experience that Pitt County School's staff worked to achieve this past year. Communication was a seen strength of Pitt County Schools, generating (14) responses. Participants expressed interest in discussing the strengths of Pitt County Schools' student supports, generating (14) responses. The fourth highest number of responses was (10) in the other category. Equity/ Diversity generated (10) comments and Student Engagement generated (9) responses, with emphasis placed on high quality education, meetings the needs of all learners, and other services that Pitt County Schools has provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and during this school year. Seven responses addressed nutrition/ school meals, and highlighted all Pitt County Schools offering free meals to all students. Six responses reflected participants' feelings of community and how they connect within Pitt County Schools.

Current Strengths of Pitt County Schools

COVID-19 / Safety: (28)

- Safety protocols throughout the district are good. Masks, cleaning procedures, etc. are keeping kids as safe as we can.
- Parents are not worried about children’s safety – they know children are being taken care of.
- Enforcing safety protocols (i.e., masks).
- Security Check-ins (2 participants said this).
- District has put a lot of protocols in place for staff/students (i.e., pandemic-working through challenges).
- Pitt County was innovative in figuring out how to get kids back in schools safely - especially compared to other schools/counties.
- Schools are open and have stayed open (2 participants said this).
- Keeping kids in school.

- Improvement – masks optional – glad to see that happened. I am not opposed to wearing a mask and wear one myself but wanted to let my kids have the option.
- I took a school tour and saw dedicated teachers and the school was laid out in a way that was healthy for students
- PCS led the charge with bringing kids back to school last year, but now they are criticized.
- Thanks to technology, teachers from different schools can now connect in professional learning communities about similar interests.
- Students can access things that they couldn't pre-COVID-19.
- Schools have gotten back to face-to-face.
- My 4th grader is glad to be back in in-person classes and my kindergartener is loving going to school and asks his mom when he can go back to school
- Adapting.
- All county choirs, band, and orchestra are back!
- PCS set procedure for ENC of how to handle the pandemic - managing how to make it work for kids and families.
- Other counties waiting to see what Pitt County is doing
- All different departments and schools are implementing plan to ensure safety for everyone.
- In a time when parents can't volunteer inside the schools, they are finding ways to engage. For example, there was a call from a grandparent who volunteered to adopt two classes by providing snacks, etc.
- Fortunate to have high school virtual learning in place.
- Pitt County has done a good job at setting standards on how to educate students during a pandemic.
- Doing a good job at looking at how to provide an education for all students and how to keep students safe.
- Keeping our kids safe.
- COVID-19 numbers dropping.

Staffing: (24)

- Principal consistency leads to staff unity.
- We (Pitt County Schools) are short staffed, but the kids aren't going without; we see principals driving buses, teachers cleaning rooms, etc. Everyone is pulling together.
- Schools are doing the best they can, considering the challenges.
- There is teamwork between staff and teachers.
- Teachers are going above the call of duty.
- Willingness for flexibility and teachers got a very needed workday.
- Awesome teachers and administration.
- Impressed with every teacher, and administrators who have stayed where they are at since COVID-19 with everything they had to do.

- I only have one kid at Wintergreen, and she has had a great experience with teachers and staff recognizing that she is bored and moving her to the AIG program, and it has been a great experience. She is happy when she comes home and shares the different things she learned that day.
- I just want to acknowledge all the hard work that teachers and staff have provided this year.
- PCS is doing a great job offering career pathways for teachers. Examples: Teacher Executive Institute, Teacher Leadership Institute, the new Pitt County Principals Fellow Program.
- Pitt County Principal Fellows Program – growing our own (2 participants said this).
- They are doing everything they can with the resources they have to the best of their ability.
- In the 8 years our family has been in Pitt County my child only had one bad teacher.
- As a two-mom family, we have had receptive teachers and administrators.
- Strong art coordinators at the county level.
- High quality teachers (especially at J.H. Rose).
- Pitt County hires qualified teachers.
- Implementing more relevant Professional Development opportunities to make sure all of the county is on one accord.
- Adding bonuses would help teachers and staff feel valued.
- Teachers get paid for subbing for other teachers.
- The district is doing a good job trying to open a pathway of growth for Teachers Assistants.
- Ability to grow teacher leadership through the teacher leadership process, and it doesn't mean you have to move up in positions but can grow as a leader.

Student Support: (23)

- PCS offers a variety of academic, social, and athletic opportunities for our children. My children have been involved in the AIG program, Science Olympiad, Battle of the Books, and even Cross Country. In each area, the school supported them and helped them achieve their best.
- Teachers are working hard to close the gap lost due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Allowing parents back into the classroom to volunteer.
- The work that PCS is doing to improve equity amongst all staff and students, as well as offering numerous opportunities for our students such as the Dual Language programs.
- Seconding that shout-out to the Dual Language programming. So wonderful that Pitt County has this available.
- Career-Oriented Programs – i.e., Culinary, FBLA, FFA and Skills USA.
- Tradesformers.
- Partnership with Pitt Community College - College courses for High School students.
- School Resource Officer Program.
- Grow Local with the Chamber of Commerce gives exposure to opportunities that students might not otherwise know about.
- Students are experiencing academic growth; Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

- My child started as a Deaf and Hard of Hearing student (DHH) in kindergarten and there has been a positive relationship with staff who speak Spanish. My child has made great grades during his four years in school.
- My child is in 8th grade and has learned a lot and has received great services from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program.
- School system is doing a good job analyzing students' needs and providing services/ resources to meet them - Trying to do right by their students (2 participants said this).
- Kids like going to school and come home happy.
- Kid likes going to school - Loves their teachers and they are great.
- Kids are excited to come to school.
- Good support in providing parents with the information to teach their kids.
- Harder to keep middle schoolers engaged due to social media/social pressure.
- Schools are good at programs like dance and music.
- Kids enjoy having their teachers and staff sing songs for 5 minutes.
- Elementary schools are excited about grades and middle school students like the social parts of school.
- PCS required arts credits before the state required them.

Communication: (14)

- Communication- Phone calls relaying information about the weather, COVID-19 and school closures.
- Some teachers have done their best to keep in touch with their students and contact them. My daughter was 100% virtual in 2020-2021 and Lake Forest went above and beyond.
- Communication with parents happens in a variety of ways, like email, phone, notes.
- Communication is strong within various school levels- classroom, school, district.
- Communication during COVID-19.
- Good teacher communication.
- Keeping us informed (3 parents said this).
- My daughter's 4th grade teacher communicated very well – emails and Remind App; School communicates well – phone calls – Facebook updates.
- Communication.
- Communication - PC school system is good at emailing and keeping everyone updated.
- Pitt County Schools are doing well with communicating with parents.
- Good communication with parents.

Equity/ Diversity: (10)

- Equity office exists now.
- Department of Excellence, Equity, and Leadership (DEEL) and building teacher leadership pipeline.
- Virtual learning option – keeps growth – devices available for every student.
- Adapting to the times.
- Meets the needs of all learners.
- All students have access to technology.

- Most schools are diverse and show it.
- Hot spots are available for families with no internet.
- I think it's important that the school system recognizes how students are from different backgrounds. It's important for kids of different backgrounds to be recognized and I have seen from my own experience with my three children and my foster children that Pitt County does a good job at that.
- The school system is creating an office of equity and we are excited to see where that goes.

Other: (10)

- No idea.
- I'm sorry but I have nothing good to say and I have lived here for over a year.
- North of the River schools have AIG every day this year, and we did not before.
- Student mental health.
- If I had to give PCS a report card, they are doing a great job.
- Keeping up with youth.
- Open enrollment and thematic schools.
- Facility updates at A.G. Cox.
- Providing transportation to children to school. (2 participants said this).

Nutrition/ School Meals: (7)

- The lunches and breakfasts have been enjoyed by my kids but a lifesaver to the kids we serve at DSS.
- Free lunches have made every parent's life less stressful by not having to pack one.
- All kids getting free lunch - Does everyone receiving free lunch at schools take the stigma away?
- Some schools were 100% free breakfast and lunch before, but now they all are.
- Lunch - During COVID-19, schools made sure the kids still ate. Even during the summer, there were always food options.
- Access to meals and lunches.
- I think they are feeding the children well.

Community: (6)

- The North of the River community atmosphere is strong, both the school and non-school community.
- There are strong community resources and school leadership.
- Community finds ways to engage.
- There is lots of community involvement/engagement.
- Impressed with the number of activities that have come back since COVID-19 that interact with the whole community - i.e., school sports.
- Community collaboration is going well.

Question 2 - What are the most pressing needs facing Pitt County Schools right now?

This question was asked of all community groups. There were 174 unique responses given from a total of 178 responses when we asked about the most pressing needs of Pitt County Schools.

Responses have been grouped into 17 categories that include: Staff Supports/Training, Curriculum, Student Behaviors, Communication, Parent/Community Engagement, COVID-19, Internet/Virtual Learning, Funding, Student Supports, Equity/Diversity, Board of Education, Geographical Challenges, Facilities, Social Workers, Student Resources, Nutrition/School Meals, and Other.

Staff Supports/Training generated the highest number of responses (32), with one theme being the need to increase the number of support staff and professional development opportunities for Pitt County Schools teachers. The category of internet and virtual learning gathered (21) comments. The Curriculum category had (19) responses, which included the need for increased college readiness efforts and support for students with unique learning plans. Student Behaviors had (15) responses, highlighting student discipline issues within Pitt County Schools and out-of-school suspensions. There were (13) responses shared regarding Communication with a significant focus on transparency and Pitt County Schools' lack of communication with parents. Parent/Community Engagement received (12) responses, with some participants sharing that they wanted to be allowed to volunteer in Pitt County Schools again. The topic of COVID-19 and safety generated (12) responses, with some comments suggesting students need more supports to get back on track after being online last year due to the pandemic. The Internet/Virtual Learning category generated (12) responses with some participants mentioning concerns about the disorganization and inconsistency across virtual learning platforms, such as Canvas and PowerSchool. Funding gathered (10) responses, and (9) responses were given regarding Student Support. Participants provided (9) responses in the area of equity/diversity. The topic of the Board of Education generated (8) responses, with participants identifying a desire to get to have better communication between the board and parents, a concern that parents are not always listened to, and a suggestion for new board members to have more training about the board and Pitt County Schools in general. Geographical Challenges and Facilities both generated (6) responses from participants. In comparison, the category Other generated (5) responses. Four responses were given regarding the two categories, Social Workers and Student Recourses, and the last category was Nutrition/School Meals, which generated (3) responses.

Perception of Most Pressing Needs

Staff Supports/ Training: (32)

- Recruitment and retention of teachers and staff (this is nationwide).
- Staffing/Administration – picking & choosing how to handle issues – i.e., bullying.
- Staffing.
- More support for staff (2 participants said this).
- Need more support - (i.e., SLP's, occupational therapists).
- Think of ways to support teachers, staff, and administrators as they are exhausted- What can we do to find creative ways to support them, and doesn't add to their plate?
- We must give them the recognition and support they need.
- Support for teachers - increasing budget/salary (Teachers need an increased salary).
- Support for teachers - release teachers from non-teaching duties.
- Staffing/ Substitute support.
- Worry around losing good teachers – Pitt County has to find local solutions.
- The loss of teachers is occurring locally and statewide - Pitt County needs to do something to keep and get new teachers.
- More competitive supplement.
- Short staffed - bus drivers, TAs and custodians.
- Expectation for teachers to be available around the clock.
- Teachers don't have all the resources they need.
- Increased mental health support for teachers.
- Provide teachers with easier access to mental health support - increased messaging about what resources are available.
- Teachers are expected to know how to navigate trauma with students and themselves but may not know how.
- High administrative turnover prevents relationship building with students and staff. North of the River middle school teachers teach 6/7/8 grades, whereas other middle school teachers only teach one grade.
- It is an unfair position to put an assistant principal in to constantly move them between schools.
- I think there is a huge need for more “troops” (i.e., teachers and staff) on the ground for exceptional children's students - their needs are not currently being met.
- Current exceptional children's teachers are going above and beyond for their students but they need help - they need more support.
- TA's are being pulled out of classrooms to do other things, making it harder for the teachers to do their jobs - it takes away from students' learning.
- Caring teachers.
- Making sure our kids are safe, and more staff that cares.
- More caring educators – we need them to not be there for the paycheck.
- Staff positions are hard to manage with principal/assistant principal turnovers.
- Class sizes: with the number of students, teachers can get overwhelmed.

- A student said that her learning was affected because the teacher was getting burnt out trying to control the class.
- Mental health days are needed for all students, teachers, and staff.

Internet/ Virtual Learning: (21)

- We need reliable internet in schools.
- Reliability of internet.
- Struggling to get students back on track due to students missing school, virtual learning.
- Assignments are lost in the shuffle of online learning.
- Students share answers for assignments and google the answers, causing students not to learn the material.
- Virtual negatives – there is a need to reacclimate those that were not engaged initially.
- Handful of students excelled at virtual learning - only a few though.
- Technology issues - young folks' have knowledge of how to use devices on a level that they didn't have before.
- Virtual learning has made them "tech savvy" but has also led to the abuse of technology.
- Parents need help with how to use Canvas and PowerSchool.
- It is discouraging for students to check PowerSchool and see multiple zeros, only because the submit didn't happen, not that they didn't do it.
- Need to have technology available for staff to take home and work so they don't have to rely on their personal devices – all students have devices, so all teachers need one too.
- Teachers need a good device to work on at school & at home – device that battery life lasts longer than 30 minutes. (5 participants said this)
- Chrome books – teachers and media coordinators aren't able to focus on their jobs because they are having to deal with student chrome books – they need to go back to class sets for students – it's been a big headache for media staff & teachers (at least in middle schools).
- Teachers need a Pitt County issued device to meet students' needs by working with them one to one.
- Staff WIFI doesn't work like it should on workdays – why doesn't the WIFI work during workdays causing teachers not to be able to do their job?

Curriculum: (18)

- Middle school encore courses are not the same from school to school. Schools North of the River have less encore options than other schools. My kids have less choices than I did 25 years ago.
- Standard curriculum is not very flexible (this is nationwide).
- Curriculum adjustment is needed.
- The curriculum has not changed in years - it needs to be adaptable.
- Students are 2-3 years behind in their curriculum due to COVID-19.

- The common core curriculum is awful. Questions are worded in a way that even I as an adult cannot answer. Questions have multiple answers that are correct, but students get it wrong if they don't pick the one the teacher wants.
- My kid doesn't feel challenged enough and gets bored.
- The AIG classes at Elmhurst need improvement- is not challenging enough.
- It's challenging for parents to get their kids in the AIG program.
- There are no extracurricular music programs at Elmhurst for 4th graders but 5th graders are able to play in the band.
- It sometimes happens that classes are offered, but they don't actually happen due to lack of an instructor or low student interest.
- Improving academic success should be a priority.
- Not all students have opportunities to learn about colleges and scholarships. Need to start a program to help those students and parents have access to the information.
- Students are passing on the wrong information about classes (such as AP & honors classes) making other students not interested in taking them.
- We have literacy labs at South Greenville, which is helping some kids but not enough.
- Every teacher has slightly different ways to use canvas- need consistency in the county, schools, grades, and teams.
- It's hard for my ADHD child to keep up with all of the different methods teachers are using to submit assignments. (I.e., some use canvas, some use email, google docs, etc.)
- Need processes/ programs in place to make sure all students and parents have access to information.

Facilities: (16)

- Schools aren't well maintained (i.e., classrooms and bathrooms).
- Physical spaces are important to their learning environment.
- Need fun and clean spaces for students to learn and for teachers to work in.
- Good working environments and spaces help retain teachers and families.
- Infrastructure- a safe building that is optimal for learning would be great at CM Eppes and I bet others.
- Buildings need updates (i.e., rooves are leaking & playgrounds need updating).
- When custodians work during the summer, completing tasks like stripping floors and working on facilitates, there is no air conditioning and during the winter they don't have heat on days that students are not in the building.
- When the students leave at the end of the day, at 3:45pm air conditioning and heat get turned off- so while staff are working at school, they don't have air conditioning or heat so why would they want to stay late and work, when it's so uncomfortable for them?
- Pitt County needs to focus on staff comfort more than saving money. (7 participants said this)

Student Behaviors/Supports: (15)

- STEPS rules are being more strongly enforced. There is little follow up for students that felt like they were wronged.
- Inequitable suspension practices.
- Behavior management.
- Kids want to get an at home suspension because of the freedom they have at home while their parents are at work.
- Discipline issues – younger kids who have lacked social interaction.
- Discipline is way down compared to other Pitt County schools.
- Blended approach - has to be positive and negative.
- Social maturity – youth are behind academically and socially.
- Students who are struggling encounter more red tape
- Students having better behaviors/ making better choices
- I think students are struggling with mental health (and I use that broadly on purpose) simply because of the many changes due to COVID-19 over the last 2 years. I know that students have access to mental health services, but perhaps incorporate that across the board rather than having students seek it out. There is such a stigma associated with these and that varies by cultures.
- Fighting is worse in middle school – kids congregate around the flight. I'm afraid my son will get hurt, and he's not the only special needs kid. I'm concerned for all of them.
- My high school student is concerned because there is so much fighting at the high school. Kids get suspended for a week, but they come back and it happens all over again. What can happen to make this stop?
- In my child's class, there is a child who is disruptive, sleeping all day, etc. Need more counselors in the classrooms to help kids.
- My child went to summer school - another student on the bus was pushing my child and I got out of the car to talk to the bus driver when I saw what was happening. I was told to stop talking to the bus driver.

Communication: (13)

- There is no communication with my principal.
- Communication and follow up.
- I don't know about information because there's not a Spanish version going out. I haven't heard of informational meetings or about PPS-PC and the services they have to offer.
- Can we get more flyers in Spanish?
- The public is not receiving all of the information that students are being exposed to in literacy.
- Teachers emailed with parents more during online learning.
- Pitt County Schools could have more face-to-face dialog.
- More face-to-face interviews, or even voice/video recordings because it helps some students and parents to be able to virtually see it and hear it at the same time. We would like more verbal and virtual presentations.

- Maybe having a video recording of Dr. Lenker giving a recap of what has happened and what will happen would help explain the information going out.
- Using the app that tracks the buses would be helpful for parents (i.e., when buses are running late, or bus broke down, etc.). Other counties use a bus app.
- Better communication from teachers and have better assessments and resources from the community.
- We need more communication from teachers. Teachers need to seek parents' advice and wisdom because they know their child better than anyone else. Teachers are overwhelmed and need more help in getting information to parents and talking to parents about individual students.
- Better communication with parents.

Parent/ Community Engagement: (12)

- Set guidelines on how to involve parents in Title I programming, accountability, and training. Each school does Title I differently, some better than others.
- There is varying PTA participation among schools.
- We need a volunteer coordinator in schools to guide groups who want to help. i.e., community groups, churches.
- Missing parents volunteering and working with students (i.e., reading to the class).
- Parents want to volunteer but are not allowed in the school. Please let us back in.
- I try and be involved as I can, and volunteer at my school but have unable to since the pandemic started two years ago – schools are saying they need parent involvement, but not allowing parent involvement.
- PCS needs to provide opportunities to hear all parents' concerns. Focus more on family engagement in education. Provide opportunities for parents to learn how to support students at home. Provide more information to parents related to education.
- Students have gotten 0's on assignments because of the lack of parent engagement (example, a parent didn't sign homework and the student is punished).
- I haven't been able to find someone to talk to because of language barrier - I went to school to talk to someone, and no one was able to communicate with me.
- Spoke to school social worker but still couldn't communicate due to language barriers.
- Want to be informed and have transparency about what kids are reading or being required to read in schools. The public is not being told 100% of what kids are being exposed to in the literature in school.
- Seeing more of our community being trauma informed.

COVID-19: (12)

- Mask mandate - I am concerned with my child not being vaccinated if masks aren't required. It sends a message that PCS doesn't care about my child or their teachers. One child getting sick is too many. COVID-19 is out there so let's acknowledge it.
- Mask mandates would make teaching less effective because of everything teachers have to worry about.
- Field trips are cancelled during COVID-19. How can we still give kids exposure and experience in creative ways?

- COVID-19 outbreaks (lack of transparency).
- Kids are struggling to play catch up, get back on their level and make growth.
- Students need extra attention and extra resources to keep up with some of the fall behind that took place during COVID-19.
- Some of the students who are returning are going to need a lot of extra help this year.
- After the pandemic, all kids should have received awards at award ceremonies.
- When the same kids get the awards each time it's not encouraging to other students- it's discouraging students.
- Need more positive re-enforcement.
- Social deficit is showing due to students being out of school.
- Teachers and staff weren't able to see students in person and help keep them on track.

Funding: (10)

- Funding- My daughter is trying to apply to be an assistant teacher, but there wasn't enough funding to hire her. Teachers only have a certain amount of time to focus on each child; they need assistants.
- My child might lack services because funding can't pay for the teachers they need.
- Proper delegation of funding – (i.e., sitting on the money, putting money where they want it to go – not where it is needed).
- Proper funding.
- More funding for teachers, both in the core subjects, but also special education, and the music and arts programs to help develop well rounded children.
- Also, more funding from Pitt County for the teacher supplement.
- I would like to see more advocacy from the Board of Education and Pitt County government, advocating to the state for better funding. Specifically, to support the Leandro Plan.
- Everyone is working extra hard – wages for classified staff are not competitive with other jobs.
- Social workers need more funding, and school counselors.
- Student allotment – teachers allocated based on allotment.

Student Supports: (9)

- Identifying personal needs of individual students.
- My son has ADHD and has an IEP- has had it from K-7th grade. In 6th grade, we had an IEP meeting and I agreed with it. This year for the meeting, Farmville Middle had two phone numbers on file, and they called one of the numbers, which was my husband's, and he didn't answer, and they never called me, and had the IEP meeting without me, and now my son isn't receiving services. They informed me of the IEP meeting after it was over. I went to talk to them to make changes, and they told me they couldn't do anything to help get the IEP changed.
- I have a kid with the 504 and she does not have to meet the same behaviors as kids who don't have a 504 and IEP to gain points to receive class awards. She gets lots of negatives on DOJO that are a reflection of the condition she has a 504 for. Putting negative points on students with 504s and IEPs is not okay.

- There was a discrepancy between experience with obtaining an IEP with white and black student – there was no advocacy from teachers for our black student.
- My son is very depressed. A Farmville Middle school teacher made fun of him when he was in front of the class and couldn't read. The teacher said "how are you in 7th grade and can't read? The principal said they didn't know about the IEP. My child now needs assistance from a counselor because of everything that has happened.
- Keeping up with assessments and following through with assessments.
- The retention and keeping students in schools is an issue.
- I'm concerned with the number of students who are not in the school system anymore and I feel committed to finding the retention on how to solve the enrollment and retention issues.
- Bus brought my child to Greenville when he lives in Farmville. Language barriers contributed to the miscommunication. My child wrote down his address to show the driver this was the wrong stop. I drive him now for fear he will get left in the wrong place.

Equity/ Diversity: (9)

- PCS needs to do a better job on the "anti-black" movement in Pitt County.
- Leandro support. My daughter attends DH Colney and was one of the only black students in 3/4 of her classes. She learned culturally insensitive content. - i.e., my daughter's teacher calls her a "thug" for not standing for the Pledge of the Allegiance.
- Pitt County needs to do better at diversity. To be more inclusive, strive for education justice, not just equity. Get rid of stigmas of North of the River schools.
- They need to do a better job recruiting diverse teachers and staff. And if people of color aren't applying to work in Pitt County, they need to figure out why. We have a biracial son, and he needs to be able to see himself frequently in a variety of positions.
- In the 38 Pitt County Public schools there is only one principal who is an African American female (parent later emailed PPS-PC after doing more research and realized there are 3 principals who are African American females) They are striving to bring more culturally diverse employees but need to retain those teachers.
- There is an inequity in how students are mentored in the system (i.e., taking advantage of opportunities, scholarships, etc.).
- Parents hold privileged information.
- Why are we not giving other awards, so all kids get an award? If the same kids get it over and over, that's not encouraging the other kids and is discouraging. - All kids deserve an award of some kind.
- Some advisory counselors don't share the same information with all students.

Board of Education: (8)

- There are a lot of freshmen (new) board members. Could they host meet and greets in each school district (maybe once per quarter) to hear concerns?
- A previous board member for the district never visited schools.
- Parents and teachers want to know and interact with board.
- We need board visibility on a regular basis.

- Parents are confused about why they are getting up and speaking at board meetings, and their voices aren't being heard.
- Parents feel their voices aren't being heard at board meetings.
- We watch the board meetings, and it seems like the voices of parents don't matter. Why can the board overturn the parents?
- There are a lot of parents at the board meetings, and their voices are not being heard.

Geographical Challenges: (8)

- North of the River schools do not have the same administrative support as some other Pitt County schools.
- Some North of the River schools share an assistant principal who is available 2-3 days per school.
- Some parents choose public school because of open enrollment
- While open enrollment has positive effects but negative ones as well (such as segregation)
- There are no good schools in Pitt County; there's only good teachers. We need to get rid of the stigma of North of the River schools being the lower educated students when it's really low resources and funding. Some schools need more funding and better resources.
- Need to re-district – very unbalanced, racially, economically, and class sizes.
- Need to redistrict – imbalance in class numbers and sizes - leading to deeper segregation gaps.
- Rural schools should have the same opportunities as other schools in the county.

Student Resources: (4)

- Lack of soap, paper towels (resources needed).
- Some schools lack the resources they need. My child's school is North of the River and went 3 weeks without soap and paper towels.
- What support are families getting for access to resources?
- My kid loves soccer but doesn't have grades for it, so he isn't active in recreation at school. How do we get kids who struggle with grades or have family issues be recreationally included at school- the community options are too expensive?

Social Workers: (4)

- An increased social worker ratio would improve retention and reduce behavioral disruptions.
- The low ratio of students to social workers is too much - A kid was not eating at home and getting into fights and only a social worker was the one to ask and figure out what was happening at home.
- Looking at it through a trauma informed perspective - The most important thing I can think of is adding more social workers to help support teachers and students
- If we had the number of social workers that is recommended in schools (1:250 ratio) then we would see more efficient care for students in Pitt County

Nutrition/ School Meals: (3)

- Menu – Kids eating ‘Slop’ (2)
- Better food

Other: (3)

- There is a negative outlook on what is happening in education with everything that is occurring in the world - Asking if it’s worth it?
- More than one person to monitor the school bus (2nd parent agreed)

Question 3: What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

This question was asked of all community groups. There were (98) unique responses given from a total of (104) responses when we asked about the most pressing needs of Pitt County Schools.

Responses have been grouped into (11) categories that include: Meeting Students' Needs/Supports, Equal Opportunity/Access, Participants Definitions: (Equity means...), Curriculum, Resources/Opportunity Allocation, Inclusion, Staff Supports/Training, Community Engagement, Geographical Challenges, Technology/Internet, and Other. Reminder that some participants' responses could fit into multiple themes, as comments were placed into themes that best fit the responses.

Meeting Students' Needs/Supports generated the highest number of responses, (21), with predominant themes being meeting students' needs where they are. The second-highest number of responses was (15) for Equal Opportunity/Access, meaning everyone should have equal opportunities and access to resources and information. Participants' Definitions generated the third-highest number of responses (14) by defining equity in their own words. Curriculum and Resources/Opportunity Allocation both generated (11) responses for each category. The topic of Inclusion presented (9) responses, with emphasis placed on the racial representation of marginalized populations and translation resources provided by Pitt County Schools. Staff Supports/Training generated (6) responses, highlighting the need for qualified teachers and stronger relationships between teachers and parents. Additionally, participants described the need for Community Engagement, and Other, sharing (5) responses. Geographical Challenges generated (4) responses, and Technology/Internet generated (3) participant responses.

Student Needs/ Supports: (23)

- We are trying to help all kids get to the same end point, but each child's needs are different and individualized in how they get there.
- Individualized services – students are getting left behind.
- Consider meeting the needs of people where they are.
- Meeting each child where they are.
- Catering to the needs of the child.
- Holding students back by having one way of learning.
- Teachers need to identify and meet their students' learning needs.
- More affordable tutoring options at all schools – not all schools are offering tutoring for their students.
- Recognize that not everyone starts at the same place.
- Every student in Pitt County having what they need to be successful, regardless of what school they attend.
- Fundamentally, the ability to exercise the knowledge they are gaining.
- Teachers tailoring their lesson plans for their students and getting the support they need to do so.
- My kids get pulled out for reading small groups for extra help. This is based in DCA and teacher recommendations. My child's grades have come up since being pulled out.
- If basic needs aren't met (Maslow's needs) – inequity exists.
- Need staff and resources in order for students to have what they need.
- Let the kids know, "I'm here. You matter." Teachers have to get on students' level.
- Every Pitt County student deserves a chance to thrive.
- Students having access and awareness to information.
- Being able to provide equitable learning for students.
- All differences are respected.
- An environment that is fair and equal.
- Students needs are different for everyone, and every grade level, and it's important to meet their needs.
- When all students receive the resources they need to graduate and prepare for high school and beyond.

Opportunity/ Access: (17)

- Equal to all – Whatever is available is available to all – no biases on color, race, etc.
- No entitlement spirit – i.e. These kids can have something, but these other kids can't.
- We need to give students opportunities to not only reach their potential but go beyond their potential.
- Access to education no matter where you start.
- Equal opportunity.
- Having equal opportunities for all.
- Equal opportunity for academic success for all children regardless of home location or economic circumstances.
- Every child has access to what they need to be successful.

- Inclusion in opportunities - students at some schools have more opportunities compared to other schools
- Giving everyone the same does not work.
- Same access to services - one student might need a different path to get similar services.
- Same opportunities and same resources to be successful - quality teachers, staff, administrators.
- Not equal access to services/resources, such as devices, internet, doctors.
- Pandemic highlighted which students do or do not have access to said resources.
- Equal across the board.
- Students having the opportunity and access to learn in the best way possible for them.
- I think sometimes students have opportunities to learn but might not have access.

Participants Definitions: (Equity means...) (15)

- Equity is giving everyone what they need to learn - every person learns differently, and equity is finding their needs and meeting them.
- Equity means we are providing supports students need for success- academic and social/emotional.
- Equity means providing resources, academics, support needs so that everyone is successful.
- Equality is when everyone gets the same thing - equity is ensuring the needs for each individual school- attention, thought & resources.
- Equity is when you get the sized box you need to see the baseball game. My child needs supports other kids don't need, but not supports other kids need. We need to access what each child needs and give them the needs that are specific to them.
- In my view, my child needs a little extra to do well, and needs different kinds of supports, so equity is taking a good look at the person in front of you and assessing their needs.
- Equity means representation, so everyone can see themselves in the administrators that serve them. It means acknowledging not everyone is starting from the same place.
- Equity to me is providing resources, tools, and opportunities to students and families that are in Pitt County Schools. It could look different from school to school based on their needs.
- Equity is all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school (college and career ready).
- Equity is removing the barriers, moving that fence.
- For me equity is giving students what they need to be successful and that is different for every child.
- Equity addresses socioeconomic status - bring in extra supplies creates inequity (for extra credit).
- Equity and equality are not the same; it's not just about race, boys/girls, ethnicity, age difference, grade differences.
- We would all be united - we as parents feel isolated and students feel isolated too.
- I think equity means my students have a chance to learn in a safe environment.
- Equity is about meeting every student where they are so we can get them as far as they can go.

Curriculum: (11)

- Curriculum adjustment.
- Equity means to be equal, students can learn about other African Americans, not just MLK, Rosa Parks, etc.
- Has to be taught to kids (i.e., food insecurity, clothes insecurity).
- A lot of kids get taken out of elective classes if they need remediation.
- This isn't fair - kids need electives. They might go into a career based on that elective.
- Elective classes don't always get the same time as core classes.
- Kids who need math help get taken out of math class for remediation time.
- Especially classes - Some schools offer a class that others don't. I understand that is based on number of students, but could the virtual options help that?
- We need to increase exposure for students. If they don't know what is out there, they will never know what is possible for them.
- Field trips may inspire new ideas for students.
- During free high school periods, students could learn more about equity by having a food pantry or laundry mat, etc.

Resources/ Opportunity Allocation: (11)

- Title 1 schools (low-income homes) receiving additional resources.
- Resources are given out to different schools based on the percentage of students at each school.
- Some schools get more funding than others.
- Resources allocated equally across schools.
- Some schools have access to different resources like stores, and transportation, giving them a different starting point than schools that have access to lots of resources.
- Fair resources across schools within the county – not all students have the same needs and need different/ more resources than other students.
- Students and staff have what they need to be successful. (2 participants said this)
- Picture of boxes – kids have number of boxes they need and/or remove the fence (barriers).
- Paying to attend sporting events is not as easy for some families as it is for others. All schools pay the same if they are in the same conference. This deters some students from playing sports for their school.
- That the system is set up so that all individuals can thrive (both teachers and learners).

Inclusion: (9)

- Dual language- “Black language,” we don't include the black vernacular - not force it on other students but be inclusive to all students. For example, when white students hear the word crib they think about where a baby sleeps, while when black students hear the word crib they think about their house.

- I had a student who had two moms, so I had to stop saying mom and dad to be inclusive to that student.
- Our LGBTQ students need to see themselves in a good way.
- My daughter feels small - for example, she made the soccer team and still feels her circle is still small. She makes great grades, but some teachers make her still feel left out because she is Hispanic.
- Figuring out a child's language. (2 participants said this)
- That teachers and students can't leave what happens outside of school at the door when they come in every day! (2 participants said this)
- Anything that happens at home and outside of school- teachers, students, and admin bring that to school with them (can't leave it at the door).

Staff Supports/ Training: (6)

- I feel like they need more staff. I know at my son's high school in the middle of the year they hired a construction teacher for one of the classes he needs to graduate in. The lack of staff I feel puts students behind and as a parent it's frustrating because I have to communicate with different temporary teachers.
- Teachers need to have a "6th sense" - be able to see if a student needs something like clothes and or devices.
- Building a system of educators that are trained to pick up signs about a student's behaviors and students' needs.
- All students have highly qualified teachers; teachers who want to be here and teachers who have the passion.
- Difficult because teachers feel undervalued and not as many people are pursuing teaching as a career (ECU graduation numbers down).
- In order for equity to happen we need to provide the faculty and staff with that information.

Community Engagement: (5)

- We see the community centers making up the gaps that the schools can't meet.
- We need to take a step back and have these conversations with more people.
- More people need to be included in the conversation about equity to figure out what everyone needs and see what others' experiences are.
- Being intentional about who you invite to conversations to ensure all voices are being heard.
- Some schools aren't tied to a community, and don't have access to the same resources as schools that have strong community connections.

Geographical Challenges: (5)

- Community Schools and Recreation doesn't offer programs to rural areas. When programs are offered, they take place in Winterville and Greenville but not outside of those areas. Information is not even shared with rural communities. If they are offered, games are always in Winterville or Greenville.

- North of the River students feel that they always lose in sports, or don't bring strong competition when sports are between rural/city schools.
- The inequality of resources is blatantly obvious between North of the River schools and other Pitt County schools.
- Volunteers aren't going to come here as easily. Practice students from ECU don't want to or can't make the drive here.
- Opportunity for all, regardless of your location.

Other: (5)

- Profitable.
- Resources and teachers aren't one size fits all.
- Preparation for public school starts with strong preschool.
- Highly charged political environment makes reaching true equity much harder than it needs to be.
- Board members need to be more involved in the general assembly to acquire wrap around services (more basic need service, mental health workers, and counselors).

Technology/ Internet: (3)

- Reliability of internet.
- Very few technologies were lost or damaged during virtual learning.
- Learning gap for students who couldn't afford the fee to pay for use of the chrome book.

Question 4 - If you identify as someone who is part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ+, etc), describe any praises or concerns you have about your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

Question 4 explores the experiences of individuals who identify as a marginalized population, with the term "marginalized" serving a wide array of categories including but not limited to race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, individuals with special needs, and individuals with at least one family member that identifies as LGBTQ+. Although these specific examples were given within the question, all groups were encouraged to share their experiences, experiences of someone they may know, or perceptions of possible experiences with Pitt County Schools.

All groups were given the opportunity to respond to Question 4, wherein (92) unique responses were shared from a total of (92). Responses have been grouped into 10 categories that include: Marginalized Populations/Community Examples, Staff/Training, Representation & Equity,

Hispanic Challenges & Experiences, Resources/Opportunity Allocation, Students Needs/Supports, Curriculum, Inclusion/Diversity, Geographical, and Other.

The highest number of participants' responses was (35) for the topic of Marginalized Populations/Community Examples, which is broken down into race, exceptional children, LGBTQ+, cultural differences, and religion. The topic Staff/Training was the second-highest number of responses being (11) responses. The category of Representation & Equity generated (10) responses, with participants expressing a need for improved racial representation in Pitt County Schools staff and equity in classroom practices. Hispanic Challenges & Experiences and Resources/Opportunity Allocation categories were tied at (8) participant responses. The topic of Students' Needs/Supports garnered (6) responses, while the Curriculum category generated (5) responses. Participants shared (4) responses in both categories, Inclusion/Diversity and Geographical within Pitt County Schools, with many sharing experiences in relation to the diversity found amongst the student population in Pitt County. The last category is Other, which generated the lowest number of responses (1).

Experiences as a Member of a Marginalized Population

Marginalized Populations/ Community Examples: (36)

Race: (13)

- My sister-in-law works for the school system and a survey was sent around asking if they were a person of color and if so which HBCU did they go to, making an assumption that if they were African American, they attended a HBCU.
- My daughter has openly said teachers favor white kids, White kids can jump around and be disruptive with no trouble, but brown skinned kids get in trouble for little things.
- Racial equity for children – experiencing discipline actions in schools. I really want to highlight that there is some really good work being done. The conversation has started but it needs to keep happening. Are their responses trauma informed?
- Dress code is not the same for black female students compared to white female students – especially black students who are “thicker.”
- Black female students are dress coded for wearing the same thing as white students, but African American students have more disciplinary actions for dress code than white students.
- Teachers are aggressive with the African American students.
- Teachers call on African American students less than white students - teachers have favorites.
- As parents volunteering and working in the schools, we have seen a difference in support and services between students of color and white students.

- Both of my children have experienced racism and me as a parent and me as an employee. A teacher used “you people.” In some areas, it’s very subtle and in others its abrupt.
- My child sees the teacher help white children more than non-white children.
- There is a perception that if you are black, you may not want to go to certain schools. This applies to both students and teachers. Students see the racial differences between one school and another.
- If parents are part of a predominant black community, and don’t see teachers who look like them, parents are already on the defense. This cycles from parents to children.
- There is a perception that white children get treated differently than other children.

Exceptional Children: (11)

- Students with IEPs- their families really struggle working with teachers and school personnel- just to get services provided. This grows majorly in middle and high school.
- Hours are spent advocating for kids with special needs to get services they need.
- I have been appalled at how people at Elmhurst have refused evaluation and testing. My husband and I have experience with the disabilities and feel invalidated and taken advantage of.
- One of my children has difficulty hearing and the school works with us in developing her 504 plan so she can have the appropriate accommodations in place in the classroom to help amplify the teachers voice so she can hear what is being taught in the classroom.
- There is high turnover in the Exceptional Children’s Department, which leads to a lack of services because of a lack of experience and knowledge.
- Some schools embrace students with disabilities, while others alienate those students.
- PCS is lacking IEP services, and IEPs are not always followed.
- Lake Forest has extra resources and support for kids who are autistic or have other learning needs.
- My child with Down Syndrome got an excellent education at Lake Forest.
- Children with special needs, the process is way too slow.
- Someone told me she took her child out of PCS because the Assistant Principal was labeling him ADHD. A teacher told the child he was bipolar. The Assistant Principal told the child if he didn’t get himself together, he would end up in prison someday.

LGBTQ +: (8)

- My son had a rainbow/ally flag pinned on his bookbag and got picked on - need support for kids who want to be an ally.
- I want my son to feel safe being an ally at school.
- How can we incorporate education in schools, so kids know what terms, and symbols mean?
- I have a student who graduated from Conley and one who is currently there now, and I feel like for us (my child and their friend group), Conley does not feel safe for students who identify other than straight. I have heard that other schools have safe spaces for non-straight students and there needs to be a safe space for all students at all schools.
- Advocate for transgender student – friend with transgender student faced with difficulty with having an understanding teacher.
- Addressing LGBTQ.

- We were fortunate as a two-mom family to have willing and understanding teachers to address concerns with individual students, particularly when our child was having difficult experiences with other students.
- There's a club at Rose high school called the gay straight alliance-, which provides a safe place for students to socially interact who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Cultural Differences: (3)

- Cultural differences in schools led to different levels of parent involvement.
- Kids shouldn't be bullied for what culture they are, or what they wear - kids come to school to get an education, not to get picked on.
- As a pastor working with LGBTQ, people of color, Muslims, they have contributed to our history in significant ways, and that is not always represented in our public schools.

Religion: (1)

- As a Jewish family we have had very different experiences at two different schools. I shared Jewish culture, Hanukkah, with the class and one teacher still equated it to Christmas. At another school, the teacher truly embraced it as our culture. There is a clear omni presence of Christianity in schools. I appreciate teachers who welcome me into the classroom to share our culture.

Staff/ Trainings: (12)

- ECU offers a Safe Zone training. It's available to all teachers. I particularly enjoyed taking part and gaining a better understanding of how to be an ally of the LGBTQ community.
- Could it be required to attend Safe-Zone training? At least for administrators?
- The best candidates for teachers and other staff need to be qualified-don't focus on just race and diverse populations.
- When I was a PCS teacher I was ridiculed by the principal and instructional coach in front of all staff at a staff meeting against the idea of seeking out and receiving Safe Zone training via ECU. I was shocked, offended, and immediately felt my students and students' guardians who identified as LGBTQIA+ were not safe or welcomed. It wasn't until I changed schools where I was supported by administration to receive this training to better serve my diverse student and guardian population. The negative experience was at FCHS.
- Teachers need a toolkit to address difficult topics that come up in the classroom - Even if you have a toolkit, can it be used in the current political climate?
- Teachers are not trained properly to deal with minority populations.
- Teachers are not trained to respectfully address minority youth when issues arise.
- Principal consistency leads to strong relationships.
- Qualified teachers to teach EC
- Population of students with needs is growing exponentially due to the pandemic and they need to start hiring more.
- My daughter really needed to go to the bathroom, and the teacher wouldn't let her go. My daughter ended up peeing herself and went to the bathroom anyway and the teacher was upset.
- Staff tries to address all students as individuals. It is vital.

Representation & Equity: (10)

- It's hard for a child to excel in class when they don't see their culture accurately represented.
- When we had a black male teacher, the black boys were excited and motivated.
- Students dealing with difficult issues don't have the same support from school to school.
- It is important to provide services to families that look different - especially with generational differences.
- My daughter is at Wintergreen Intermediate. It is mostly white, and she isn't. She felt like she had to be somebody different. She approached the teacher when students were not being accepting, and the teacher was less supportive.
- Until last year, all my child's teachers were white. It was amazing to have a teacher last year who looked like her.
- Unless in a dual speaking school – school lacks representation of others.
- Discipline is different for different people. Some students get treated more harshly than others.
- High level of parental advocacy needed, not all kids have this.
- There are varying instances in advocacy- some parents know how to advocate, and others do not.

Hispanic Challenges and Experiences: (8)

- Need more support for English language learners (ESL).
- Face-to-face learning is a challenge for ESL Students - virtual learning even more challenging.
- ESL students took the hardest hit of COVID-19 - have been slammed.
- Expectations on ESL students are unreasonable.
- Communication with ESL parents is challenging.
- Teachers do not treat Hispanic students the same as white students - Students feel teachers do that because of the color of their skin.
- Hispanic students feel they aren't being heard.
- Spanish speaking staff - hard to find highly qualified teachers that are Latino/Spanish speaking.

Resources/ Opportunity Allocation: (8)

- Education – thankful for that welcoming opportunity, but not everyone has it.
- How can you make more resources available? (i.e., books, etc.).
- Difficulty accessing needed services (i.e., transportation, no contact numbers).
- Backpack buddies have been beneficial for students who need it.
- Someone had difficulty with nursing company and their resources, but through parent and administration advocacy there are other options available now.
- Inequities in resources for minority population (Hispanics/ African Americans)

- ESSER funds provides transportation and after school tutoring to students who need it, but not at all schools - these students are showing levels of growth.
- Money is not equally available to all schools from the parents and community.

Students Needs/ Supports: (8)

- My child has been treated equally and individually at their school.
- South Central offered courses during spring and winter break in a tiered system depending on a student's learning needs in order to help students get back on track after COVID-19 – this builds students' confidence and improved their learning.
- Meeting students at their level and providing them with the education they need to grow.
- Middle schoolers – more accepting of others than adults are.
- In middle school there is not a lot of bullying that relates to one's sexual orientation, race/ethnicity.
- I don't see middle school students bullying about race, or other identification factors.
- Social workers play a key role in helping students go through the grief process, like how they were when we had a young student who got into a car accident this year.
- Social workers have provided services like grief, but also tangible resources like food and clothes.

Curriculum: (5)

- History/ Social Studies Classes – my mother is Native American, and when Native American culture was discussed in her class, some things my daughter learned in class were not accurate.
- A book my daughter was reading in school talked about her culture but the information in the book was not true and did not match what she knows. I was able to go into her class and share my culture.
- Need more culture factual books in schools.
- A number of years ago, I worked with a textbook publisher- their statement on how they went about creating text was for the "lowest denominator" of capability of teacher- and with most texts being defined by major state curriculums IE TEXAS- That also impedes the information being taught.
- Testing does not take differences into account.

Inclusion/Diversity: (4)

- Most forms that come home are not inclusive; very generic – for families who are not traditional mom, dad, and two kids.
- The school has been welcoming to my daughter and her friends who see themselves as different.
- The schools aren't united, and kids are broken up in small groups - (i.e., all of the Hispanic students hangout together).

- I have felt discriminated against and scared to speak out and attend meetings like community conversations.

Geographical: (4)

- Depends on the school/ region on how young people are treated.
- Rural schools have less business support because there are less businesses near them.
- North of the River schools and the community do a good job bringing everyone together and allowing differences to make schools and communities stronger.
- Farmville’s Hispanic community has grown and is growing, and needs more support.

Other: (1)

- I’ve never shared an experience dealing with this question.

Question 5 - Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

This question was asked of all community groups. There were (82) unique responses out of (94) total responses. Comments sometimes reiterated what had already been said in response to previous questions. This category was broken into the subheadings of Curriculum/Extracurriculars, Staff Supports/Training, Parent Engagement & Suggestions, Safety/ COVID-19 & Other, Nutrition/ School Meals, Representation & Equity, Student Behaviors, Transportation/Geographical, Dress Code, Student Supports/Needs, Communication/Transparency, Internet/Virtual Learning, and Other.

The category that received the highest number of participant responses was Curriculum/Extracurriculars, with (16) responses. Participants voiced their concerns about how the current curriculum does not address specific topics and the need for better testing modifications. Staff Supports/Training had the second-highest number of participant responses, (14), and expressed the need for more support for teachers, administrators, and other Pitt County staff. Within the Parent Engagement & Suggestions category, there were (12) responses, with some participants expressing interest in volunteering in schools and supporting Pitt County staff. Safety/ COVID-19 & Other generated (10) participant responses, highlighting Pitt County School’s response to student safety. There were (8) responses for the Nutrition/School Meals category, in which participants shared their concerns about school meals not being nutritious or making proper accommodations for students who have food allergies. Representation & Equity generated (7) responses from participants, pointing out the need for more representation within Pitt County schools regarding diversity among staff and within the curriculum. Student Behaviors generated (5) responses in which participants expressed their concerns and feedback regarding discipline and behaviors. Transportation/Geographical also gathered (5) responses highlighting the need for more bus drivers and better access to transportation. Responses from (5) participants showed an interest in dress code modifications. There were (4) comments within the Student Supports/Needs, highlighting the need to make sure

students are in the correct grade level and receiving enough support to catch back up. Additionally, participants described the need for Communication/Transparency and Other, sharing (3) participant responses, while Internet/Virtual Learning generated (2) responses.

Additional Comments/Suggestions for PPS

Curriculum/ Extracurriculars: (16)

- Children are facing various issues sooner and the school system has not adjusted to help address concerns earlier as needed.
- Curriculum doesn't address these topics/concerns -i.e., puberty, gender inequality, self-confidence/esteem.
- Getting all clubs and extra circulars in elementary schools.
- We need to move away from common core curriculum.
- My daughter inaccurately learned about Thanksgiving and was not taught about the Trail of the Tears... what they are teaching is a lie.
- Need to add time during classroom changes to allow students to unwind and give them a break – there is no lunchroom socialization since lunch is served in classrooms. Students are finding ways to get out of classrooms to go to bathrooms to destroy things, smoke, etc.
- School system has been “white washing” and “cisgender washing” what they teach in schools - leading to why there is an increase in suicides in their 20s.
- Students need to see themselves in our learning about our history (i.e., LGBTQ community).
- Read to achieve.
- No more End of Grade (EOG) testing- students can do well all year, then fail a test. i.e. testing anxiety. (2 participants said this)
- We need more testing modifications and less testing.
- Transition from high school to college – how can local education institutions better partner with Pitt County Schools to make the transition from high school to college easier? How do we help parents understand this process and their options?
- Need more Spanish immersion schools - expanding options.
- Focusing on issues like masks, books, CRT, takes away time that needs to be spent on issues like supporting students.
- What students are watching on devices is far worse than what they are reading in schools. Books provide room for critical thought.

Staff Supports/ Trainings: (15)

- There is a need for increased staff support across all schools.
- Educators are under a lot of stress - Typical expectations have increased, and teachers need supports from Pitt County.
- Need more subs.
- Need more subs - Need parents to be subs.
- What else can we do to support our staff, besides monetary, but that does help.
- As many problems as we've had with the school, our child's teacher has been amazing.
- Administrators need training on institutionalized racism. Administrators should be educated about CRT so they can act accordingly and make decisions accordingly.
- I think it's important for PCS to offer a variety of professional development opportunities for teachers to help better prepare them to meet the needs of all students (neurodiverse, differently abled, racial/ethnic minorities, different cultures and religions, different sexual orientations and gender identities, etc.) so all students feel welcomed, and they can know that they are important and matter. If we take care of all of our children, we can help ensure quality education is available to all of our students.
- Take care of the educators. Ask them what they want rather than telling them what they will do. Parents and educators are going through this together.
- Teachers have had added tasks, and nothing has been taken away. They need more support. For example, now that kids all have Chromebooks, teachers have the added task of monitoring what kids are doing on their Chromebook throughout the school day.
- Find additional ways to support Pitt County staff - from the bottom to the top.
- Teachers need more money and support.
- Teachers are appreciated for the work that they do. It is hard and we are so thankful that they are there for the children.
- Pitt County does not have enough resources to help students navigate through a pandemic. Even how they handle authority, especially with the transition from online school to being back in-person. Need more supportive staff in schools - (i.e., TA's, EC teachers, mental health professionals).
- When issues do come up that concern staff, and educators, we would like a seat at the table while discussing them.

Parent Engagement & Suggestions: (12)

- Need for more parent education.
- As parents, how can we better support those individuals elected to support us?
- Parents were grateful for the snow day being a day off instead of a virtual school day.
- Early release days are hard for working parents and teachers are saying students don't get much out of it.
- Explore the option for year-round school. Explore data from other school systems on the impact on quality of life.
- Early release days are confusing; hard for working parents - prefer whole days off instead of half days.
- We need to allow parents to volunteer in schools.
- Parents don't give up, push forward, be strong, and show your children that you are strong - show them that you are engaged and interested in their education.

- Open door policy: keep an open-door policy - let us know it's okay for us to come talk to you.
- Schools need support from parents. This is not just financial, but also encouragement and a willingness to work together as a team.
- Explore ways for parents and teachers to work together to meet needs of kids.
- Someone besides teachers need to advocate for teachers.

Safety/ COVID-19 & Other: (10)

- Dedicated COVID-19 contact person - great addition to building - frees staff up to continue duties of assisting/teaching their students.
- Why is everything COVID-19?
- Mask mandates - please take care of our babies when they go back to school so parents can feel ok.
- Don't turn mask wearing into a political issue. My child's safety is more important than your political stance on the subject.
- Grateful for how teams have worked to keep kids safe (contact tracing).
- In pandemic life- my daughter developed a lot of anxiety. My daughter needs help coping with just everyday life now with the pandemic
- Need to control what students are bringing in their backpacks – maybe metal detectors for high schoolers (2 participants said this)
- Concerned about safety – communication vague - when parents get calls with concerning information it needs to be more detailed!
- Are schools having conversations with students about psychological problems due to the pandemic? Do they need more resources? I'm not seeing any and my child goes to Creekside.

Nutrition/ School Meals: (8)

- School meals are not nutritious.
- Food for food allergy children.
- Title 1 schools' lunches are less than quality (2 participants said this).
- Need to have food options for all students and their dietary needs. i.e. lactose, vegan, pork, food allergies (2 participants said this).
- Substitutes for children with allergies.
- I pack my daughter's lunch just because I know the food lunch will not fill her up.

Representation & Equity: (7)

- With all this talk about equity, if Pitt County truly wants to be transformative, they need to include students in instruction. Critical Race Theory is true American history. My black student is hearing about Christopher Columbus, but what about Indigenous students who need to be represented? Be more inclusive to the needs of all students. The prison system is based on 3rd grade reading skills. There is a need to think about why - each year the lowest educated and lowest test scores are black students and are labeled as low performing. They are underrepresented and under resourced.

- Equity comment- having someone like you represented in administration is important, not just for students but for everyone. Representation matters! Need diversity of voices at the table.
- Its important students are seeing that someone like them is being represented. If everyone is seeing from the same perspective, there will be no change.
- Need students to know that racism exists.
- Critical race theory is a college course - it's important to have diversity for the people sitting at the table - needing students to know that racism exists, so we can help.
- One transgender former marine came into my office for support. She had been kicked out of her religious tradition and from her spouse and family. Years later after experiencing warm welcome, she returned again to my office and said we saved her life. Had to share that. Kids need it too.
- Is there a way to help the kids be more united and for teachers to help them socialize outside of their culture?

Student Behaviors: (5)

- Schools need parents to be aware of bullying behavior they may display towards schools.
- Students should be allowed less access to their cell phones during the day, or there should be a no cell phone policy.
- Middle school: expect more discipline regarding behaviors - What is it like at a high school level? What is being done with helping students interact with each other, and teach them to be kind?
- Schools need to recognize kids who aren't doing as well and are struggling. I understand rewarding positive grades and behaviors, but what do schools do for the kids who are struggling?
- Keep focusing on growing in awareness of how trauma absolutely impacts learning and connection. Though the focus on the variety of traumas is important to validate and include all voices, the point to remember is learning is impacted for all in a classroom when there is trauma.

Transportation/ Geographical: (5)

- Even if they have devices, they may not have broadband access or transportation to access.
- In larger cities buses are provided, transportation should be available for open enrollment students (no matter where they live).
- Need more bus drivers.
- TAs are required to drive buses, but don't get paid the bus driver rate (Gets paid the TA rate).
- It would be great if Building Hope could pick up students at all schools not just the current ones they can ONLY pick up!!

Dress Code: (5)

- The dress code policy is enforced in younger grades but not in middle school and even less in high school. Either have a dress code or don't.

- Teachers have to enforce a lot, so enforcing uniforms is a battle they sometimes choose not to fight. We want kids in school, and don't want dress code violations keeping them out of school or their classrooms.
- Get rid of UNIFORMS.
- No uniforms.
- Needs to be one dress code for all students across the county.

Student Supports/ Needs: (4)

- Need to make sure the grade level students are in their right grade level and matches their ability. (2 participants said this)
- Building Hope students come with a pile of work that they don't understand how to do, and the teachers are aware of that- which causes frustration for the students, staff, and tutors.
- Nervous for middle school because we don't know people there and don't know how well he will be taken care of there.

Communication/ Transparency: (3)

- Kids have different maturity levels. What one child can handle in the circumstances, another cannot. Parents want more information about the other options regarding the things they don't want child exposed to. For example, if the class is reading a book the parent doesn't want the child to read, what other options are available for that child?
- More information about who to contact and what to ask/express.
- Parents learn things about their kids' schools from the news before the school calls and informs them about the concerning information.

Other: (3)

- No (2 participants said this)
- I appreciate this forum and gives me hope that a group of adults can get together, and voices can be heard.

Internet/ Virtual Learning: (2)

- There is a balance between learning and technology- this is a hard balance because as a parent, we understand the need for technology but also need to learn without it as well. Also, limiting screen time.
- Some kids don't have the same starting point for access to technology.

Discussion

In order to ensure complete anonymity for participants, Community Conversation forums did not contain any questions requesting demographic information, such as gender, ethnicity, or age. The collection of demographic information was largely dependent upon the visual observation of each facilitator. This was made more difficult during virtual conversations if cameras were off but could sometimes be determined if facilitators or other participants knew the demographics of

participants from other avenues. Facilitators made every effort to gather demographic information when possible. However, there was room for variance and error with visual reporting, due to the format of the conversations.

Overall, as best we can estimate, the 189 parent and community participants were 80.42% female, 19.58% male, 60.32% Caucasian, 33.33% African American, 5.82% Hispanic, 0.53% Other, 2.65% Minors, 85.71% ages 18-54, and 11.64% ages 55 and up.

At each Community Conversation, participants were given information about Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County. Throughout the conversation, some participants chose to respond to the Community Conversation questions verbally, while others chose to share their responses on a written document or in the Zoom chat. To ensure that all responses were collected, one facilitator asked the questions while the other recorded verbal responses and monitored responses written in the chat box. At the end of the conversation, participants were given the contact information for Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County. If participants had any further responses they wanted to share, they were asked to contact Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County. For the purposes of this report, all written and verbal responses have been included.

Some participants may have responded both in writing and verbally to the same question, resulting in overrepresentation of their responses. It is impossible to know which responses have been overrepresented in this manner. This phenomenon likely occurred evenly throughout the questions asked. While some overrepresentation is possible, far more participants offered their thoughts verbally than submitted them in written form, and the use of the online chat box made it easier to distinguish the possibility of the same comment appearing twice from the same person.

Conclusion

Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County engaged in 16 Community Conversations from July 2021-April 2022. Seven conversations were held only in person, seven were held both in person and on Zoom, and two were held only on Zoom. Every effort was made to include participants from the entire county, therefore collecting voices from a diverse group of community members. All who participated did so voluntarily. Although facilitators were careful to use the same format and questions each time, it is important to note that this was not a tightly controlled scientific process. PPS-PC's goal in conducting Community Conversations is to 'measure the pulse' of our community about their perceptions of the public schools. At each conversation, participants appeared grateful to have an avenue where their voices could not only be heard but could be delivered to the key educational decision makers in Pitt County. PPS-PC considers it a responsibility to provide a pathway for community voices to reach those key decision makers. PPS-PC also takes the opportunity to dispel any rumors or misinformation about public education in general or PCS in particular that arise during the course of Community Conversation discussions. PPS-PC also strives to remain neutral as all responses are welcomed.

Although the opinions and perspectives expressed by the 189 participants varied widely, there were some areas of convergence. We believe the following statements reflect significant views and opinions expressed by the 2021-2022 Community Conversation participants.

- **Accolades**

Accolades for Pitt County Schools came easily as we polled community conversation participants. Participants appreciated the way in which safety towards COVID-19 and general safety was handled. Comments were made about the quality of staff and administrators, and particularly their ability to display teamwork in a year filled with so many challenges. Participants mentioned gratitude for the various types of support available to students when it came to recovering from the effects of a pandemic, planning for the future, and connecting to community resources and extra-curricular activities. Communication was mentioned as a positive piece of Pitt County Schools, with a particular focus on the frequency and variety of communication delivered. Equity and diversity were addressed and some participants felt that efforts in this area are moving in a positive direction. Meals and nutrition also came up as a positive factor when thinking of what Pitt County Schools is doing well.

- **Concerns**

It can be difficult to group the most common concern into one category, as it covers multiple needs. The most common response to this question was that participants are hopeful for “more.” They would like to see more support for teachers (more funding for programs, supplies, and salaries, more people serving as support staff) , more teachers, more opportunities for students to receive services, more available and reliable technology, more social workers and other resources that would support student emotional needs, more support for teachers and students who are associated with the exceptional children’s department, more support when identifying children for the exceptional children’s department, more translators. To summarize, the largest concern highlighted several gaps and showed that more support in many forms is needed in order to meet those gaps. There were also comments about the curriculum, with some concerns about what is not offered (such as the same classes at each school, or the rigor of curriculum, or some life skills and life lessons that could be incorporated into curriculum). Participants were concerned about the maintenance of facilities, and voiced opinions that physical spaces must be well maintained to contribute to the positive learning environment for students, as well as a positive teaching and work environment for teachers and staff. Some comments voiced concerns about student behavior. Communication also came up in question two, with some suggestions to have more visual communication (such as recorded videos that address the same issues that written and phone communication expresses). Some participants expressed a thought that parents want to be more engaged by volunteering in the schools, and receiving information about what their children are learning. Some concerns arose about issues related to COVID-19 such as masks, the virus itself, and learning gaps that came from the time not in school, and the loss of activities like field trips. These comments were less of a focus as the year went on and COVID-19 opportunities, and parent connections. Some participants indicated a desire for more of a connection between parents and the Board of Education.

Geographical challenges came up a number of times, with concerns covering topics like schools in different areas of the county having different opportunities and resources, as mentions of redistricting as a way of addressing some of the geographical inequities. And while nutrition and meals came up as a source of praise in question one, there were a few comments that addressed concerns about this topic, particularly as it related to amount of food, type of food, and food that accommodates allergies.

- **Defining Equity**

Individualized learning and services for students was a theme that seemed to rise to the top as we asked participants how they define equity in relation to public education. Participants addressed their thoughts that all students should be able to have opportunities that are beneficial to the individual student, and be able to easily identify and access those opportunities. The definition of equity did not vary greatly from participant to participant, and seemed to follow a trend of each child getting the resources, services, and interactions that match that child's specific needs. Once again, curriculum came up in this question, with some comments reflecting that participants are curious about the value that more field trips, more life skills focused curriculum, and more elective courses might add to the student experience. There was some conversation about equity not only applying to individual students, but also the recognition that each school should be seen as an individual school with its own needs independent of other schools. An overall sense that students should feel accepted in their learning environment no matter what their circumstances are was expressed. Some comments arose regarding staff support and training that would allow staff and teachers to better identify the specific needs of each child in their school and connect them with the appropriate resources. Some comments indicated that greater equity is achieved when schools and communities are able to successfully work together and rely on one another. As equity was discussed, geographical issues entered the conversation, indicating that not only might schools in varying parts of the county have individual needs, but resources and programs in one part of the county might look different from resources and programs in another part of the county. One theme that came up in some comments included internet and technology, with participants noting that some barriers still exist for both staff and students in this area.

- **Experiences of Marginalized Groups**

As participants shared their experiences as being part of a marginalized group or knowing someone who shares such an experience, PPS-PC received a wide variety of responses. No matter what marginalized population(s) someone identified with, one theme that was common among participants was the support of additional training for teachers that would leave them more equipped to respond to a variety of diverse issues in a way that makes all students feel more included in the classroom setting. Trainings would also increase the skills teachers have to offer, meeting the desire for high quality teachers in all situations. Some participants expressed the importance of representation, indicating that students need to be able to see themselves represented among their classroom, in the overall school setting, within the student body, and within teachers and staff. Some comments during conversations that came from this question focused on a need for more support for students and families who do not speak English as a first language. This

would include interpreters, printed materials in the students' and family's native language, and an overall attempt to make these students feel included in day-to-day learning. Geographic differences were also addressed in this question, once again indicating that some resources may be available at some schools that are not available at others. Some participants shared positive experiences about how extra supports such as social workers or inclusive teachers have enhanced their experience as a marginalized population.

- **Anything Else**

Curriculum and extra-curricular activities were addressed more than any other topic as participants spoke to this question. Some participants wondered if there was a way to bring more extra-curricular activities into the school day and connect it to already created curriculum, allowing for richer learning opportunities, and meeting the needs of some students who may not be able to stay after school or connect to community opportunities. Not surprisingly, the concept of "more" came up again, referring to more staff, more support for staff already in place, more staff input before decisions are made, and more training for staff to allow for a richer student experience. Parent engagement entered the conversation a few times, both as it relates to individual classrooms and schools, as well as districtwide. Comments about COVID-19 and how it has been approached in the schools were both positive and negative, and again, seemed to be the focus of the conversation less and less as we neared the end of the year. Discussions about safety related to COVID-19 did lend themselves to moving towards general safety and ensuring that steps are taken to make students feel safe within their buildings. School meals once again came up, echoing both positive and negative comments from previous questions. Representation once again came up from some participants, highlighting the need for all students to be seen, heard, and represented among staff, peers, and curriculum. The concern around student behaviors was once again mentioned in this question, as was a concern that some students and teachers still have barriers to technology and internet usage. Transportation issues were addressed during this question, with some comments asking for more bus drivers, more pay for bus drivers, and more transportation options for students. Dress code was not an overwhelming theme in this question, but did come up a few times as parents asked for a more lenient dress code policy and attention to having each school follow the same policy. Some participants brought up ideas about the need for staff, parents, students, and community members to find ways to work together to provide more wrap around support for students. While communication was addressed in previous questions, it also came up here, once again focusing on open and timely communication between parents and schools.

Parents for Public Schools Community Conversations Report July 2021– April 2022



*To obtain a copy of this report, please contact Parents for Public Schools at
(252) 758-1604 ext. 201.

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Horizons Parents 7/28/21 (In-person)
4 participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Communication - phone calls relaying information about the weather, COVID and school closures.
- Some teachers have done their best to keep in touch with their students and contact them. My daughter was 100% virtual in 2020-2021 and Lake Forest went above and beyond.
- Lunch - During COVID-19, schools made sure the kids still ate. Even during the summer, there were always food options.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Funding: My daughter is trying to apply to be an assistant teacher, but there wasn't enough funding to hire her. Teachers only have a certain amount of time to focus on each child therefore, they need assistants.
- My child might lack services because funding can't pay for the teachers they need.
- Students need extra attention and extra resources to keep up with some of the fall behind that took place during COVID-19.
- Some of the students who are returning are going to need a lot of extra help this year.
- Teachers don't have all the resources they need.
- Buildings need updates (i.e., rooves are leaking & playgrounds need updating).
- Mask mandate: I am concerned with my child not being vaccinated if masks aren't required. It sends a message that PCS doesn't care about my child or their teachers. One child getting sick is too many. COVID-19 is out there so let's acknowledge it.
- Mask mandates would make teaching less effective because of everything teachers have to worry about.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Equal to all – whatever is available is available to all – no base on color, race, etc.
- Especially classes - some schools offer a class that others don't. I understand that is based on number of students, but could the virtual options help that?
- Let the kids know, "I'm here. You matter." Teachers have to get on students' level.
- No entitlement spirit – i.e., these kids can have something, but these other kids can't.
- A lot of kids get taken out of elective classes if they need remediation.
- This isn't fair - kids need electives. They might go into a career based on that elective.
- Elective classes don't always get the same time as core classes.
- Kids who need math help get taken out of math class for remediation time.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- My daughter is at Wintergreen Intermediate. It is mostly white, and she isn't. She felt like she had to be somebody different. My daughter approached the teacher when students were not being accepting, and the teacher was less supportive.
- Until last year, all my child's teachers were white. It was amazing to have a teacher last year who looked like her.
- Someone told me she took her child out of PCS because the Assistant Principal was labeling him ADHD. A teacher told my child he was bipolar. The Assistant Principal told the child if he didn't get himself together, he would end up in prison someday.
- Both of my children have experienced racism and me as a parent and me as an employee. A teacher used "you people." In some areas, it's very subtle and in others it's abrupt.
- My child sees the teacher help white children more than non-white children.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Mask mandates: Please take care of our babies when they go back to school so parents can feel ok.
- Open door policy: keep an open-door policy - let us know it's okay for us to come talk to you
- Other: Take care of the educators. Ask them what they want rather than telling them what they will do. Parents and educators are going through this together.

**North Pitt Attendance Area 10/5/21 (In-person) & 10/6/21 (Virtual)
7 participants (In-person) & 0 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Some schools were 100% free breakfast and lunch before, but now they all are.
- Communication with parents happens in a variety of ways, like email, phone, notes.
- Principal consistency leads to staff unity.
- Communication is strong within various school levels- classroom, school, district.
- Safety protocols throughout the district are good. Masks, cleaning procedures, etc. are keeping kids as safe as we can.
- Keeping kids in school.
- Grow Local with the Chamber of Commerce gives exposure to opportunities that students might not otherwise know about.
- Thanks to technology, teachers from different schools can now connect in professional learning communities about similar interests.
- The North of the River community atmosphere is strong, both the school and non-school community.
- There are strong community resources and school leadership.
- North of the River schools have AIG everyday this year, and we did not before.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Middle school encore courses are not the same from school to school. Schools North of the River have less encore options than other schools. My kids have less choices than I did 25 years ago.
- Rural schools should have the same opportunities as other schools in the county.
- It sometimes happens that classes are offered, but they don't actually happen due to lack of an instructor or low student interest.
- North of the River schools do not have the same administrative support as some other Pitt County schools.
- Some North of the River schools share an assistant principal who is available 2-3 days per school.
- Staff positions are hard to manage with principal/assistant principal turnovers.
- High administrative turnout prevents relationship building with students and staff. North of the River middle school teachers teach 6/7/8 grades, whereas other middle school teachers only teach 1 grade.
- It is an unfair position to put an assistant principal in to constantly move then between schools.
- Field trips are cancelled during COVID-19. How can we still give kids exposure and experience in creative ways?

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- We are trying to help all kids get to the same end point, but each child's needs are different and individualized in how they get there.
- We need to give students opportunities to not only reach their potential but go beyond their potential.
- We need to increase exposure for students. If they don't know what is out there, they will never know what is possible for them.
- Field trips may inspire new ideas for students.
- Community Schools and Recreation doesn't offer programs to rural areas. When programs are offered, they take place in Winterville and Greenville but not outside of those areas. Information is not even shared with rural communities. If they are offered, games are always in Winterville or Greenville.
- North of the River students feel that they always lose in sports, or don't bring strong competition when sports are between rural/city schools.
- The inequity of resources is blatantly obvious between North of the River schools and other Pitt County schools.
- Volunteers aren't going to come here as easily. Practice students from ECU don't want to or can't make the drive here.
- We see the community center making up the gaps that the schools can't meet.
- Paying to attend sporting events is not as easy for some families as it is for others. All schools pay the same if they are in the same conference. This deters some students from playing sports for their school.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- North of the River schools and the community do a good job bringing everyone together and allowing differences to make schools and communities stronger.
- If parents are part of a predominant black community, and don't see teachers who look like them, parents are already on the defense. This cycles from parents to children.
- There is a perception that if you are black, you may not want to go to certain schools. This applies to both students and teachers. Students see the racial differences between one school and another.
- Principal consistency leads to strong relationships.
- My child has been treated equally and individually at their school.
- There is a perception that white children get treated differently than other children.
- Money is not equally available to all schools from the parents and community.
- Rural schools have less business support because there are less businesses near them.
- When we had a black male teacher, the black boys were excited and motivated.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- There is a need for increased staff support across all schools.
- Schools need support from parents. This is not just financial, but also encouragement and a willingness to work together as a team.
- Schools need parents to be aware of bullying behavior they may display towards schools.
- Students should be allowed less access to their cell phones during the day, or there should be a no cell phone policy.
- The dress code policy is enforced in younger grades but not in middle school and even less in high school. Either have a dress code or don't.
- Teachers have to enforce a lot, so enforcing uniforms is a battle they sometimes choose not to fight. We want kids in school, and don't want dress code violations keeping them out of school or their classrooms.
- Teachers have had added tasks, and nothing has been taken away. They need more support for example, now that kids all have Chromebook, teachers have the added task of monitoring what kids are doing on their Chromebook throughout the school day.

**Chamber Leadership Institute 11/10/21 (In-person)
25 Participants**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- School Resource Officer Program.
- Partnership with Pitt Community College - College courses for High School students.
- Tradesformers.
- Access to meals and lunches.
- Student mental health.
- Career-Oriented Programs – i.e., Culinary, FBLA, FFA and Skills USA.
- Communication during COVID-19.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Recruitment and retention of teachers and staff (this is nationwide).
- Identifying personal needs of individual students.
- Behavior management.
- Standard curriculum is not very flexible (this is nationwide).

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Access to education no matter where you start.
- Fundamentally, the ability to exercise the knowledge they are gaining.
- Resources allocated equally across schools.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Discipline is different for different people. Some students get treated more harshly than others.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Need for more parent education.
- There is a balance between learning and technology- this is a hard balance because as a parent, we understand the need for technology but also need to learn without it as well. Also, limiting screen time.

- Some kids don't have the same starting point for access to technology.
- Even if they have devices, they may not have broadband access or transportation to access.
- Transition from high school to college – how can local education institutions better partner with Pitt County Schools to make the transition from high school to college easier. How do we help parents understand this process and their options?

**Farmville High School 11/16/21 (In-person) & 11/17/21 (Virtual)
4 participants (In-person) & 0 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- If I had to give PCS a report card, they are doing a great job.
- No idea.
- Good teacher communication.
- We (Pitt County Schools) are short staffed but the kids aren't going without; we see principals driving buses, teachers cleaning rooms, etc. Everyone is pulling together.
- Schools are doing the best they can, considering the challenges.
- In a time when parents can't volunteer inside the schools, they are finding ways to engage. For example, there was a call from a grandparent who volunteered to adopt two classes by providing snacks, etc.
- Community finds ways to engage.
- There is teamwork between staff and teachers.
- Teachers are going above call of duty.
- Parents are not worried about children's safety – they know children are being taken care of.
- There is lots of community involvement/engagement.
- PCS led the charge with bringing kids back to school last year, but now they are criticized.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- There is no communication with my principal.
- Parent's need help with how to use Canvas and PowerSchool.
- Set guidelines on how to involve parents in Title I programming, accountability, and training. Each School does Title I differently, some better than others.
- There are a lot of freshmen (new) board members. Could they host meet and greets in each school district (maybe once per quarter) to hear concerns?
- Lack of soap, paper towels (resources needed).
- Some schools lack the resources they need. My child's school is North of the River and went 3 weeks without soap and paper towels.
- A previous board member for the district never visited schools.
- Parents and teachers want to know and interact with board.
- There is varying PTA participation among schools.
- We need board visibility on regular basis.
- We need a volunteer coordinator in schools to guide groups who want to help. i.e., community groups, churches.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Profitable.
- Every student in Pitt County having what they need to be successful, regardless of what school they attend.
- An environment that is fair and equal.
- Some schools aren't tied to a community, and don't have access to the same resources as schools that have strong community connections.
- Some schools have access to different resources like stores, and transportation, giving them a different starting point than schools that have access to lots of resources.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- My child with Down Syndrome got an excellent education at Lake Forest
- The school has been welcoming to my daughter and her friends who see themselves as different.
- High level of parental advocacy needed, not all kids have this.
- Lake Forest has extra resources and support for kids who are autistic or have other learning needs.
- PCS is lacking IEP services, and IEPs are not always followed.
- Someone had difficulty with nursing company and their resources, but through parent and administration advocacy there are other options available now.
- There are varying instances in advocacy- some parents know how to advocate, and others do not.
- Some schools embrace students with disabilities, while others alienate those students.
- There is high turnover in the EC department, which leads to a lack of services because of a lack of experience and knowledge.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Kids have different maturity levels. What one child can handle in the circumstances, another cannot. Parents want more information about the other options regarding the things they don't want child exposed to. For example, if the class is reading a book the parent doesn't want the child to read, what other options are available for that child?
- Explore ways for parents and teachers to work together to meet needs of kids.

Possessing the Keys Academy (PKOK) 12/13/21 (In-person)
9 participants (In-person)

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Keeping parents informed.
- Keeping us informed (2 participants said this).
- Security Check-in.
- Security Check.
- My daughter's 4th grade teacher communicated very well – emails and Remind App; School communicates well – phone calls – Facebook updates.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Staffing/Administration – picking and choosing how to handle issues – i.e., bullying.
- Staffing.
- Proper delegation of funding - (i.e., Sitting on the money, putting money where they want it to go – not where needed).
- Proper funding.
- Menu – kids eating 'slop.'
- Menu.
- Better food.
- Improving academic success.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Meeting each child where they are.
- Figuring out a child's language.
- Figuring a child's language.
- Catering to the need of the child.
- Equal opportunity for academic success for all children regardless of home location or economic circumstances.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Depends on the school/ region how young people are treated.
- Teachers are not trained to respectfully address minority youth when issues arise.
- Teachers are not trained properly to deal with minority.
- Addressing LGBTQ.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Get rid of UNIFORMS.
- No uniforms.
- No (2 participants said this)

Developing Positive Attitudes Program (DPAP) 12/16/21 (In-person)
14 participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Keeping up with youth.
- Enforcing safety protocols (i.e., masks).
- Communication.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Communication and follow up.
- STEPS Rules being more strongly enforced/ follow up for students that felt liked they were wronged.
- Inequitable suspension practices.
- Staffing/ Substitute.
- COVID-19 outbreaks (lack of transparency).

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Equal across the board.
- Consider/ meeting needs of people where they are.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Inequities in resources for minority population (Hispanics/ African Americans).

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Why is everything COVID-19?
- Don't turn mask wearing into a political issue. My child's safety is more important than your political stance on the subject.

**South Central Attendance Area 1/31/22 (In-person) & 2/1/22 (Virtual)
4 participants (In-person) & 5 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- District has put a lot of protocols in place for staff/students (i.e., pandemic-working through challenges).
- Willingness for flexibility and teachers got a very needed workday.
- Equity office exists now
- Department of Excellence, Equity, and Leadership (DEEL) and building teacher leadership pipeline.
- Pitt County Principal Fellows Program – growing our own.
- Students can access things that they couldn't pre-COVID-19.
- Virtual learning option – keeps growth – devices available for every student.
- Schools have gotten back to face-to-face.
- My 4th grader is glad to be back in in-person classes and my kindergartener is loving going to school and asks his mom when he can go back to school.
- Pitt County was innovative in figuring out how to get kids back in schools safely - especially compared to other schools/ counties.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Need to redistrict – imbalance in class numbers and sizes - leading to deeper segregation gaps.
- Some parents choose public school because of open enrollment.
- While open enrollment has positive effects but negative ones as well (such as segregation).
- Inequity in how students are mentored in system (i.e., taking advantage of opportunities, scholarships, etc.).
- Parents hold privileged information.
- Students don't have opportunities to learn about colleges and scholarships. Need to start a program to help those students and parents have access to the information.
- Processes/ programs in place to make sure all students and parents have access to information.
- Some advisory counselors don't share information with other students.
- Students are passing on the wrong information about classes (such as AP & honors classes) making students not interested in taking them.
- Schools aren't well maintained (i.e., Classrooms and bathrooms).
- Physical spaces are important to their learning environment.
- Need fun and clean spaces for students to learn and for teachers to work in.
- Good working environments and spaces help retain teachers and families.
- I think there is a huge need for more “troops” (i.e., teachers and staff) on the ground for expectational children's students - Their needs are not currently being met
- Current expectational children's teachers are going above and beyond to their students but they need help - they need more support.
- Class sizes: with the number of students, teachers can get overwhelmed.

- A student said that her learning was affected because the teacher was getting burnt out trying to control the class.
- TAs are being pulled out of classrooms to do other things, making it harder for the teachers to do their jobs - it takes away from students learning.
- Pitt County schools could have more face-to-face dialog.
- More face-to-face interviews, or even voice recordings because it helps some students to virtually see it and hear it at the same time - See more verbally and virtually presentations.
- Maybe having a video recording of Dr. Lenker to recap what has happened and what will happen - help explain the information going out.
- More support staff.
- Using the app that tracks the buses would be helpful for parents (i.e., when buses are running late, or bus broke down, etc.) - other counties use a bus app.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- In order for equity to happen we need to provide the faculty and staff with that information.
- Every child has access to what they need to be successful.
- Teachers need to have a “6th-sense” - be able to see if student needs something like clothes and or devices.
- Has to be taught to kids (i.e., food insecurity, clothes insecurity).
- If basic needs aren’t met (Maslow’s needs) – inequity exists.
- Need staff and resources in order for students to have what they need.
- Building a system of educators that are trained to pick up signs about a student’s behaviors and students’ needs.
- During free high school periods, students could learn more about equity by having a food pantry or laundry mat, etc.
- Board members need to be more involved in the general assembly to acquire wrap around services (more basic need service, mental health workers, and counselors).
- Equality to me is providing recourses, tools, and opportunities to students and families that are in Pitt County schools. It could look different from school to school based on their needs.
- Inclusion in opportunities - students at some schools have more opportunities for students compared to other schools

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Need more support for English language learners (ESL).

- Face-to-face learning is a challenge for ESL Students - virtual learning even more challenging.
- ESL students took the hardest hit of COVID-19 - have been slammed.
- South Central offered courses during spring and winter break in a tiered system depending on a student's learning needs - to help students get back on track after COVID-19 - Builds students' confidence that improved their learning.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Grateful for how teams have worked to keep kids safe (contact tracing).
- Early release days are confusing; hard for working parents - prefer whole days off instead of half days
- Parents were grateful for the snow day being a day off instead of a virtual school day.
- Early release days are hard for working parents and teachers are saying students don't get much out of it.
- Explore option for year-round school - explore data from other school systems on the impact on quality of life.
- Need more Spanish immersion schools - expanding options.
- Middle school: expect more discipline regarding behaviors - What is it like at a high school level? What is being done with helping students interact with each other, and teach them to be kind?
- Are schools having conversations with students about psychological problems due to the pandemic? Do they need more resources? I have not seen it and my child goes to Creekside.
- Pitt County does not have enough resources to help students navigate through a pandemic. Even how they handle authority, especially with the transition from online school to being back in-person. Need more supportive staffs in schools - (i.e., TA's, EC teachers, mental health professionals).

Alpha Delta Kappa Teacher's Sorority 2/8/22 (In-person & Virtual)
15 participants (In-person) & 10 participants (Virtual)

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Adapting.
- Staying open.
- Hire qualified teachers.
- Schools are open and have stayed open.
- Adapting to the times.
- Awesome teachers and administration.
- Meets the needs of all learners.
- All students have access to technology.
- Students are experiencing academic growth; Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- Most schools are diverse and show it.
- Hot spots are available for families with no internet.
- All county choirs, band, and orchestra are back!

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Reliability of internet.
- Curriculum adjustment.
- We need reliable internet in schools.
- The curriculum has not changed in years - it needs to be adaptable.
- Students are 2-3 years behind in their curriculum.
- Missing parents volunteering - who works with students (i.e., reading to the class).
- More support for staff.
- More competitive supplement.
- Social workers need more funding and school counselors.
- Student allotment – teachers allocated based on allotment.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Reliability of internet.
- Curriculum adjustment.
- Students and staff have what they need to be successful.
- Students and staff have what they need to be successful.
- Having equal opportunities for all.
- All differences are respected.
- Equal opportunity.
- Giving everyone the same does not work.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Meeting students at their level and providing them with the education they need to grow.
- Children with special needs, the process is way to slow.
- Qualified teachers to teach EC.
- Expectations on ESL students are unreasonable.
- Communication with ESL parents are challenging.
- Testing does not take difference in account.
- ESSER funds provides transportation and after school tutoring to students who need it, but not at all schools - these students are showing levels of growth.
- Backpack buddies have been beneficial for students who need it.
- Population of students with needs is growing exponentially due to the pandemic and they need to start hiring more.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Educators are under a lot of stress - typical expectations have increased, and teachers need supports from Pitt County.
- We need more testing modifications and less testing.
- Someone besides teachers need to advocate for teachers.
- Need more subs.
- Need more subs - Need parents to be subs.
- Need more bus drivers.

EC Parents & Hispanic Families 2/17/22 (In-person)
4 participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- I'm sorry but I have nothing good to say and I have lived here for over a year.
- No idea.
- My child started as a Deaf and Hard of Hearing student (DHH) in kindergarten and there has been a positive relationship with staff who speaks Spanish. My child has made great grades during his four years in schools.
- My child is in 8th grade and has learned a lot and has received great services from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- I don't know about information because there's not a Spanish version going out. I haven't heard of informational meetings or about PPS-PC and the services they have to offer.
- Can we get more flyers in Spanish?
- My son has ADHD and has an IEP- has had it from K-7th grade. In 6th grade, we had an IEP meeting and I agreed with it. This year for the meeting, Farmville Middle had two phone numbers on file, and they called one of the numbers, which was my husband's, and he didn't answer, and they never called me, and had the IEP meeting without me, and now my son isn't receiving services. They informed me of the IEP meeting after it was over. I went to talk to them to make changes, and they told me they couldn't do anything to help get the IEP changed.
- My son is very depressed. A Farmville Middle school teacher made fun of him when he was in front of the class and couldn't read. The teacher said "how are you in 7th grade and can't read? The principal said they didn't know about the IEP. My child now needs assistance from a counselor because of everything that has happened.
- I haven't been able to find someone to talk to because of the language barrier. I went to school to talk to someone, and no one was able to communicate with me.
- Spoke to school social worker but still couldn't communicate due to language barriers.
- The bus brought my child to Greenville when he lives in Farmville. My child wrote down his address to show the driver this was the wrong stop. I drive him now for fear he will get left in the wrong place.
- Child went to summer school - another student on the bus was pushing her child and she got out of her car to talk to the teacher when she saw what was happening and they told her to stop talking to the bus driver.
- High school student is concerned because there is so much fighting in the high school. Kids get suspended for a week, but they come back, and it happens all over again. What can happen to make this stop?
- Fighting is worse in middle school – kids congregate around the flight. I'm afraid my son will get hurt, and he's not the only special needs kid. - I'm concerned for all of them.

- My kid loves soccer but doesn't have grades for it, so he isn't active in recreation at school. How do we get kids who struggle with grades or have family issues be recreationally included at school- the community options are too expensive.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- We would all be united - we as parents feel isolated and students feel isolated too.
- My daughter feels small - for example, she made the soccer team and still feels her circle is still small. She makes great grades, but some teachers make her still feel left out, because she is Hispanic.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- I feel discriminated against and scared to speak out and attend meetings like community conversations.
- Farmville's Hispanic community has grown and is growing, and needs more support.
- Teachers do not treat Hispanic students the same as white students - Students feel teachers do that because of the color of their skin
- Feels that the schools aren't united, and kids are broken up in small groups - (i.e., all of the Hispanic students hang out together).
- Hispanic students feel they aren't being heard.
- My daughter really needed to go to the bathroom, and the teacher wouldn't let her go. My daughter ended up peeing herself and went to the bathroom anyway and the teacher was upset.
- My daughter has openly said teachers favor white kids, White kids can jump around and be disruptive with no trouble, but brown skinned kids get in trouble for little things.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Nervous for middle school because we don't know people there and don't know how well he will be taken care of there.
- In pandemic life- my daughter developed a lot of anxiety. My daughter needs help coping with just everyday life now with the pandemic.
- Schools need to recognize kids who aren't doing as well and are struggling. I understand rewarding positive grades and behaviors, but what do schools do for the kids who are struggling?
- Is there a way to help the kids be more united and for teachers to help them socialize outside of their culture?

**J.H. Rose High School Attendance Area 2/22/22 (In-person) & 2/24/22 (Virtual)
4 participants (In-person) & 4 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Open enrollment and thematic schools.
- All kids getting free lunch - does everyone receiving free lunch at schools take the stigma away?
- Free lunches have made every parent's life less stressful having free lunch in schools by not having to pack one.
- Kids like going to school and come home happy.
- In the 8 years in Pitt County my child has only had one bad teacher.
- Kid likes going to school - loves their teachers and they are great.
- Good support in providing parents with the information to teach their kids.
- Improvement – masks optional – glad to see that happened. I am not opposed to wearing a mask and wear one myself but wanted to let my kids have the option.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Worry around losing good teachers – Pitt County has to find local solutions.
- The loss of teachers is occurring locally and statewide - Pitt County needs to do something to keep and get new teachers.
- Students who are struggling encounter more red tape.
- Students having better behaviors/ making better choices.
- We have literacy labs at South Greenville, which is helping some kids but not enough.
- Need more support - (i.e., SLP's, occupational therapists).
- Every teacher has slightly different ways to use canvas- need consistency in the county, schools, grades, and teams.
- It's hard for my ADHD child to keep up with all of the different methods teachers are using to submit assignments - (I.e., some use canvas, some use email, google docs, etc.) .
- It's discouraging for students to check PowerSchool and see multiple zeros, only because the submit didn't happen; not that they didn't do it.
- What support are families getting for access to resources?
- My kid doesn't feel challenged enough, gets bored.
- The AIG classes at Elmhurst need improvement- is not challenging enough.
- It's challenging for parents to get their kids in the AIG program.
- No music programs at Elmhurst for 4th graders but 5th graders are able to play in the band.
- Want to be informed and have transparency about what kids are reading or being required to read in schools. The public is not being told 100% of what kids are being exposed to in the literature in school.
- Public is not receiving all of the information that students are being exposed to in literacy.

- Parents are confused why they are getting up and speaking at board meeting, and their voices aren't being heard.
- Parents feel their voices aren't being heard at board meeting.
- We watch the Board meetings, and it seems like the voices of parents don't matter. Why can the board overturn the parents?
- There are a lot of parents at the board meetings, and their voices are not being heard.
- Parents want to volunteer but are not allowed in the school. Please let us back in.
- I try and be involved as I can, and volunteer at my school but unable to since the pandemic started two years ago - saying they need parent involvement, but not allowing parent involvement.
- I have a kid with the 504 and she does not have to meet the same behaviors as kids who don't have a 504 and IEP to gain points to receive class awards, She gets lots of negatives on DOJO that are a reflection of the condition she has a 504 for. - putting negative points on students with 504s and IEPs
- After the pandemic, all kids should have received awards at award ceremonies.
- When the same kids get the awards each time it's not encouraging to other students - it's discouraging students.
- Need more positive re-enforcement.
- Why are we not giving other awards, so all kids get an award? If the same kids get it over and over, that's not encouraging the other kids and is discouraging. - all kids deserve an award of some kind.
- The common core curriculum is awful. Questions are worded in a way that even I as an adult cannot answer. - Questions have multiple answers that are the correct but students get it wrong if they don't pick the one the teacher wants.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Equity and equality are not the same; it's not just about race, boys/girls, ethnicity, age difference, grade differences.
- Equality is when everyone gets the same thing - Equity is ensuring the needs for each individual school- attention, thought & resources.
- Every Pitt County student deserves a chance to thrive
- In my view, my child needs a little extra to do well, and needs different kinds of supports, so equity is taking a good look at the person in front of you and assessing their needs.
- Equity is when you get the sized box you need to see the baseball game. My child needs supports other kids don't need, but not supports other kids need. We need to access what each child needs and give them the needs that are specific to them.
- My kids get pulled out for reading small groups for extra help. This is based in DCA and teacher recommendations. My child's grades have come up since being pulled out.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Most forms that come home are not inclusive; very generic – for families who are not traditional mom, dad, and two kids.
- My son had a rainbow/ally flag pinned on his bookbag and got picked on - Need support for kids who want to be an ally
- I want my son to feel safe being an ally at school.
- How can we incorporate education in schools, so kids know what terms, and symbols mean?
- Could it be required to attend Safe-Zone training? At least for administrators?
- Kids shouldn't be bullied for what culture they are, or what they wear - kids come to school to get an education, not to get picked on.
- Students with IEP- their families really struggle working with teachers and school personnel- just to get services provided. - this grows majorly in middle and high school.
- Hours are spent advocating for kids with special needs to get services they need
- Cultural differences in schools led to different levels of parent involvement.
- I have been appalled at how people at Elmhurst have refused evaluation and testing. My husband and I have experience with the disabilities and feel invalidated and taken advantage of.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Find additional ways to support Pitt County staff - from the bottom to the top.
- What else can we do to support our staff, besides monetary, but that does help.
- We need to allow parents to volunteer in schools.
- TAs are required to drive buses, but don't get paid the bus driver rate (Gets paid the TA rate).
- Teachers need more money and support.
- As many problems as we've had with the school, our child's teacher has been amazing.
- We need to move away from common core curriculum.

**Ayden Grifton Attendance Area 3/23/22 (In-person) & 3/24/22 (Virtual)
4 participants (In-person) & 0 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Harder to keep middle schoolers engaged due to social media/social pressure.
- Implementing more relevant Professional Development opportunities to make sure all of county is on one accord.
- PCS set procedure for ENC of how to handle the pandemic - managing how to make it work for kids and families.
- Other counties waiting to see what Pitt County is doing.
- All different departments and schools are implementing plan to ensure safety for everyone.
- Fortunate to have high school virtual learning in place.
- Kids are excited to come to school.
- Schools are good at it – programs like dance and music.
- Kids enjoy having their teachers and staff sing songs for 5 minutes.
- Elementary schools are excited about grades and middle school students like the social parts of school.
- Pitt County has done a good job at setting standards on how to educate students during a pandemic.
- Doing a good job at looking how to provide an education for all students and how to keep students safe.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Struggling to get students back on track due to students missing school, virtual learning.
- Social deficit is showing due to students being out of school.
- Assignments are lost in the shuffle of online learning.
- Students have gotten 0s on assignments because of the lack of parent engagement.
- Teachers and staff weren't able to see students in person and help keep them on track.
- Students share answers for assignments and google the answers - causing students not to learn the material.
- Virtual negatives – RE acclimate those that were not engaged initially.
- Kids are struggling to play catch up, get back on their level and make growth.
- Handful of students excelled at virtual learning - only a few though.
- Social maturity – youth are behind academically and socially.
- Blended approach - has to be positive and negative.
- Pressing needs - short staffed - bus drivers, TAs and custodians.
- Everyone is working extra hard – wages for classified staff not competitive with other jobs.

- Discipline issues – younger kids who have lacked social interaction.
- Discipline is way down compared to other Pitt County schools.
- Technology issues - young folks’ knowledge of how to use devices on a level that they didn’t have before.
- Virtual learning has made them “tech savvy” but has also led to the abuse of technology.
- Teachers emailed with parents more during online learning.
- Kids want to get an at home suspension because of the freedom they have at home while their parents are at work.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Same opportunities and same resources to be successful - quality teachers, staff, administrators.
- Being able to provide equitable learning for students.
- All students have highly qualified teachers; teachers who want to be here and teachers who have the passion.
- Difficult because teachers feel undervalued and not as many people pursuing teaching as a career (ECU graduation numbers down).
- Title 1 schools (low-income homes) receiving additional resources.
- Learning gap for students who couldn’t afford the fee to pay for use of the chrome book.
- Very few technologies were lost or damaged during virtual learning.
- Resources are given out to different schools based on the percentage of students at each school.
- Some schools get more funding than others.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Spanish speaking staff - Hard to find highly qualified teachers that are Spanish speaking
- Unless dual speaking schools – school lacks representative of others.
- Middle schooler – more accepting of others than adults.
- In middle school there are not a lot of bullying that relates to ones: Sexual orientation, Race/ethnicity.
- I don’t see middle school students bullying about race, or other identification factors.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Need to add time during classroom changes to allow students to unwind and give them a break - no lunchroom socialization since lunch is served in classrooms. Students finding ways to get out of classrooms to go to bathrooms to destroy things, smoke, etc.
- Dedicated COVID-19 contact person - great addition to building - frees staff up to continue duties of assisting/teaching their students.
- Getting all clubs and extra circulars in elementary schools.

Cedar Bridge Church 3/27/22 (In-person)
9 participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- High quality teachers (especially at J.H. Rose).
- Required arts credits in Pitt County before state required them.
- Strong art coordinators at the county level.
- Facility updates at A.G. Cox.
- Receptive teachers/administrators as a two-mom family at Eastern and at other schools within the county.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Support for teachers - increasing budget/salary (Teachers need an increase salary).
- Support for teachers - Release teachers from non-teaching duties.
- Expectation for teachers to be available around the clock.
- Discrepancy between experience with obtaining IEP with white and black student - no advocacy from teachers.
- Increased mental health support for teachers.
- Provide teachers with easier access to mental health support - increased messaging about what resources are available.
- Teachers are expected to know how to navigate trauma with students and themselves but may not know how.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Same access to services - ne student might need a different path to get similar services.
- Students having access and awareness to information.
- Recognize that not everyone starts at the same place.
- Picture of boxes – kids have number of boxes they need and/or remove the fence (barriers).
- Highly charged political environment makes reaching true equity much harder than it needs to be.
- Equity addresses socioeconomic status - bring in extra supplies creates inequity (for extra credit).
- Not equal access to services/resources, such as devices, internet, doctors.
- Pandemic highlighted what students do or do not have access to said resources.
- Preparation for public school starts with strong preschool.
-

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- We were fortunate as a two-mom family to have willing and understanding teachers to address concerns with individual students, particularly when our child was having difficult experiences with other students.
- How can you make more resources available? (i.e., books, etc.)
- Advocate for transgender student – friend with transgender student faced with difficulty with having an understanding teacher.
- Teachers need toolkit to address difficult topics that come up in classroom - even if you have toolkit, can it be used in the current political climate?
- Students dealing with difficult issues don't have some support from school to school.
- Difficulty accessing needed services (i.e., transportation, no contact numbers).
- Important to provide services to families that look different - especially with generational differences.
- As parents volunteering and working in the schools, we have seen a difference in support and services between students of color and white students.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- What students are watching on devices is far worse than what they are reading in schools. - books provide room for critical thought.
- More information about who to contact and what to ask/express.
- Focusing on issues like masks, books, CRT, takes away time that needs to be spent on issues like supporting students.
- Children are facing various issues sooner and school system has not adjusted to help address concerns earlier as needed.
- Curriculum doesn't address these topics/concerns -i.e., puberty, gender inequality, self-confidence/esteem.
- As parents, how can we better support those individuals elected to support us?

BRACE 3/29/22 (Virtual)
14 participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing well?

- Communication - PC school system is good at emailing and keeping everyone updated.
- Impressed with the number of activities that have come back since COVID-19 that interact with the whole community - i.e., school sports.
- Impressed with every teacher, and administrators who have stayed where they are at since COVID-19 with everything they had to do.
- Community collaboration is going well.
- I took a school tour and saw dedicated teachers and the school was laid out in a way that was healthy for students.
- They are doing everything they can with the recourses they have to the best of their ability.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Think of ways to support teachers, staff, and administrators as they are exhausted.
- What can we do that is creative ways to support them, and doesn't add to their plate?
- We must give them the recognition and support they need.
- I'm concerned with the number of students who are not in the school system anymore and I feel committed to finding the retention on how to solve the enrollment and retention issues.
- Seeing more of our community being trauma informed.
- The retention and keeping students in schools is an issue.
- There is a negative outlook on what is happening in education with everything that is occurring in the world - asking if it's worth it?
- With increased social worker ratio there would be improved retention and reduced behavioral disruptions.
- The ratio between schools and social workers are too much - a kid was not eating at home and getting into fights and only a social worker was the one to ask and figure out what was happening at home.
- Looking at it through a trauma informed perspective - the most important thing I can think of is adding more social workers to help support teachers and students.
- If we had the number of social workers that is recommended in schools (1:250 ratio) then we would see more efficient care for students in Pitt County.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Equity is giving everyone what they need to learn - every person learns differently, and equity is finding their needs and meeting them
- Holding students back by having one way of learning

- Equity is removing the barriers, moving that fence.
- Teachers tailoring their lesson plans for their students, and getting the support they need to do so.
- We need to take a step back and have these conversations with more people.
- Our LGBTQ students need to see themselves in a good way.
- More people need to be included in the conversation about equity to figure out what everyone needs and see what others experiences are.
- Being intentional about who you invite to conversations to ensure all voices are being heard.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Racial equity for children – experiencing discipline actions in schools. I really want to highlight that there is some really good work being done. The conversation has started but it needs to keep happening - are their responses trauma informed?
- History/ Social Studies Classes – my mother is Native American, and when Native American culture was discussed in her class, and some things my daughter learned were not accurate.
- A book my daughter was reading in school talked about her culture but the information in the book was not true and did not match what she knows. I was able to go into her class and share my culture.
- Need more culturally factual books in schools.
- The best candidates for teachers, and other staff need to be qualified - don't focus on just race and diverse populations
- Education – thankful for that welcoming opportunity, but not everyone has it.
- It's hard for a child to excel in class when they don't see their culture accurately represented.
- As a pastor working with LGBTQ, people of color, Muslims, they have contributed to our history in significant ways, and that is not always represented in our public schools.
- My sister-in-law works for the school system and a survey was sent around asking if they were a person of color and if so which HBUC did they go to. - Making an assumption that if they were African American, they attended a HBCU.
- A number of years ago, I worked with a textbook publisher- their statement on how they went about creating text was for the "lowest denominator" of capability of teacher- and with most texts being defined by major state curriculums IE TEXAS- That also impedes the information being taught.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- Parents don't give up, push forward, be strong, and show your children that you are strong - show them that you are engaged and interested in their education.
- That they are appreciated for the work that they do. It is hard and we are so thankful that they are there for the children.
- School system has been "white washing" and "cisgender washing" what they teach in schools - Leading to why there is an increase in suicides in their 20s.
- Students need to see themselves in our learning about our history (i.e., LGBTQ community)
- Keep focusing on growing in awareness of how trauma absolutely impacts learning and connection. Though the focus on the variety of traumas is important to validate and include all voices, the point to remember is learning is impacted for all in a classroom when there is trauma.
- One transgender former marine came into my office for support. She had been kicked out of her religious tradition and from her spouse and family. Years later after experiencing warm welcome, she returned again to my office and said we saved her life. Had to share that. Kids need it too.

**DH Conley Attendance Area 3/29/22 (In-Person) & 3/30/22 (Virtual)
0 participants (In-Person) & 23 participants (Virtual)**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- I think it's important to that the school system recognizes how students are found different backgrounds. It's important for kids of different backgrounds to be recognized and I have seen from my own experience with my three children and my foster children that Pitt County does a good job at that.
- The work that PCS is doing to improve equity amongst all staff and students. As well as offering numerous opportunities for our students such as the Dual Language programs.
- I only have one kid at Wintergreen, and she has had a great experience with teachers and staff recognizing that she is bored and moved her to AIG program, and it has been a great experience. She is happy when she comes up and shares the different things, she learned that day.
- I just want to acknowledge all the hard work that teachers and staff have provided this year.
- Seconding that shout-out to the Dual Language programming. So wonderful that Pitt Co. has this available.
- PCS offers a variety of academic, social, and athletic opportunities for our children. My children have been involved in the AIG program, Science Olympiad, Battle of the Books, and even Cross Country. In each area, the school supported them and helped them achieve their best.
- PCS is doing a great job offering career pathways for teachers. Examples: Teacher Executive Institute, Teacher Leadership Institute, the new Pitt County Principals Fellow Program.
- The lunches and breakfasts have been enjoyed by my kids but a lifesaver to the kids we serve at DSS.
- Teachers are working hard to close the gap lost due to COVID-19 restrictions. Allowing parents back into the classroom to volunteer.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- I would like to see more advocacy from the Board of Education and Pitt County government, advocating to the state for better funding. Specifically, to support the Leandro Plan.
- Infrastructure- a safe building optimal for learning would be great at CM Eppes and I bet others.
- More funding for teachers, both in the core subjects, but also special education, and the music and arts programs to help develop well rounded children.
- Also, more funding from Pitt County for the teacher supplement.
- PCS needs to provide opportunities to hear all parents' concerns. Focus more on family engagement in education. Provide opportunities for parents to learn how to support students at home. Provide more information to parents related to education.

- I think students are struggling with mental health (and I use that broadly on purpose) simply because of the many changes due to COVID-19 over the last 2 years. I know that students have access to mental health services, but perhaps incorporating that across the board rather than having students seek it out. There is such a stigma associated with these and that varies by cultures.
- PCS needs to do a better job on the “anti-black” movement in Pitt County.
- Leandro support. Daughter attends DH Colney and was one of the only black students in 3/4 classes. Culturally insensitive content. - i.e., my daughter’s teacher calls her a “thug” for not standing for the pledge of the allegiances.
- Pitt County needs to do better at diversity. To be more inclusive, strive for education justice, not just equity. Get rid of stigmas of North of the River schools.
- There’s no good schools in Pitt County there’s only good teachers. We need to get rid of the stigma of those schools being the lower educated students when it’s really low resources and funding. Some schools need more funding and better resources.
- They need to do a better job recruiting diverse teachers and staff. And if people of color aren’t applying to work in Pitt County, they need to figure out why. We have a biracial son, and he needs to be able to see himself frequently in a variety of positions.
- In the 38 Pitt County Public schools there is only one principal who is an African American female (parent later emailed PPS-PC after doing more research and realized there are 3 principals who are African American females) - They are striving to bring more culturally diverse employees but need to retain those teachers.

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- For me equity is giving students what they need to be successful and that is different for every child.
- Dual language- “Black language”, we don’t include the black vernacular - not force it on other students but be inclusive to all students. For example, when white students hear the word crib they think about where a baby sleeps, while when black students hear the word crib they think about their house.
- I had a student who had two moms, so I had to stop saying mom and dad to be inclusive to that student.
- That the system is set up so that all individuals can thrive (both teachers and learners).
- That teachers and students can’t leave what happens outside of school at the door when they come in every day!
- Anything that happens at home and outside of school- teachers, students, and admin bring that to school with them (can’t leave it at the door).
- Equity means providing resources, academics, support needs so that everyone is successful.

- Equity is all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school (college and career ready).
- Equity means representation, so everyone can see themselves in the administrators that serve them. It means acknowledging not everyone is starting from the same place.
- And that they can't leave what happens outside of school at the door when they come in every day!
- Equity means we are providing supports students need for success- academic and social/emotional.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- As a Jewish family we have had very different experiences at two different schools. I shared Jewish culture, Hanukkah, with the class and one teacher still equated it to Christmas. At another school, the teacher truly embraced it as our culture. There is a clear omni presence of Christianity in schools. I appreciated teachers who welcome me into the classroom to share our culture.
- When I was a PCS teacher I was ridiculed by the principal and instructional coach in front of all staff at a staff meeting against the idea of seeking out and receiving Safe Zone training via ECU. I was shocked, offended, and immediately felt my students and students' guardians who identified as LGBTQIA+ were not safe or welcomed. It wasn't until I changed schools where I was supported by administration to receive this training to better serve my diverse student and guardian population. The negative experience was at FCHS.
- ECU offers a Safe Zone training. It's available to all teachers. I particularly enjoyed taking part and gaining a better understanding of how to be an ally of the LGBTQ community.
- I have a student who graduated from Conley and one who is currently there now, and I feel like for us (my child and their friend group)- Conley does not feel safe for students who identify other than straight. I have heard that other schools have safe spaces for non-straight students and there needs to be a safe space for all students at all schools.
- One of my children has difficulty hearing and the school works with us in developing her 504 plan so she can have the appropriate accommodations in place in the classroom to help amplify the teachers voice so she can hear what is being taught in the classroom.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- With all this talk about equity, if Pitt County truly wants to be transformative, they need to include students in instruction. Critical Race Theory is true American

history. My black student is hearing about Christopher Columbus, but what about Indigenous students who need to be represented? Be more inclusive to needs of all students. The prison system is based on 3rd grade reading skills. There is a need to think about why - each year the lowest educated and lowest test scores are black students and are labeled as low performing. They are underrepresented and under resourced.

- Equity comment- having someone like you represented in administration is important, not just for students but for everyone. Representation matters! Need diversity of voices at the table.
- Its important students are seeing that someone like them is being represented. If everyone is seeing from the same perspective, there will be no change.
- Need students to know that racism exists.
- Administration needs training on institutionalized racism. Administration should be educated about CRT- so they can act accordingly and make decisions accordingly.
- My daughter inaccurately learned about Thanksgiving and was not taught about the Trail of the Tears... what they are teaching is a lie.
- Critical race theory is a college course - it's important to have diversity for the people sitting at the table - Needing students to know that racism exists, so we can help.
- I think it's important for PCS to offer a variety of professional development opportunities for teachers to help better prepare them to meet the needs of all students (neurodiverse, differently abled, racial/ethnic minorities, different cultures and religions, different sexual orientations and gender identities, etc.,) so all students feel welcomed, and they can know that they are important and matter. If we take care of all of our children, we can help ensure quality education is available to all of our students.
- I appreciate this forum and gives me hope that a group of adults can get together, and voices can be heard.

**Building Hope Community Life Center 4/5/22 (In-Person)
18 Participants**

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- Pitt County Schools are well with communicating with parents.
- I think they are feeding the children well and providing transportation to children to school.
- Keeping our kids safe.
- Providing transportation.
- Good communication with parents.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- Caring teachers.
- Making sure our kids safe, and more staff that cares.
- Better communication from teachers and have better assessments and resources from the community.
- More caring educators – we need them to not be there for the paycheck.
- In my child’s class, there is a child who is disruptive, sleeping all day, etc. Need more counselors in the classrooms to help kids.
- We need more communication from teachers. Teachers need to seek parents’ advice and wisdom because they know their child better than anyone else. Teachers are overwhelmed and need more help in getting information to parents and talking to parents about individual students.
- Mental health days are needed for all students, teachers, and staff.
- Better communication with parents.
- Keeping up with assessments and following through with assessments.
- More than one person to monitor the school bus (2 participants said this)

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- Equity means to be equal, students can learn about other African Americans, not just MLK, Rosa Parks, etc.
- I feel like they need more staff. I know at my son’s high school in the middle of the year they hired a construction teacher for one of the classes he needs to graduate in. The lack of staff I feel puts students behind and as a parent it’s frustrating because I have to communicate with different temporary teachers.
- Fair resources across schools within the county – not all students have the same needs and need different/ more resources than other students.
- Resources and teachers aren’t one size fits all.
- Individualized services – students are getting left behind.
- Teachers need to identify and meet their students’ learning needs.

- More affordable tutoring options at all schools – not all schools are offering tutoring for their students.

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- I've never shared an experience dealing with this question.
- Dress code is not the same for black female students compared to white female students – especially black students who are “thicker.”
- Black female students are dress coded for wearing the same thing as white students, but African American students have more disciplinary actions for dress code than white students.
- Teachers are aggressive with the African American students.
- Teachers call on African American students less than white students - teachers have favorites.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- It would be great if Building Hope could pick up students at all schools not just the current ones they can ONLY pick up!!
- Food for food allergy children.
- Read to achieve.
- In larger cities buses are provided, transportation should be available for open enrollment students (no matter where they live).
- School meals are not nutritious.
- Title 1 schools' lunches are less than quality (2 participants said this)
- Need to have food options for all students and their dietary needs. i.e., lactose, vegan, pork, food allergies (2 participants said this)
- Substitutes for children with allergies.
- I pack my daughter's lunch just because I know the food lunch will not fill her up.
- Needs to be one dress code for all students across the county.
- No more End of Grade (EOG) testing- students can do well all year, then fail a test. I.e., testing anxiety (2 participants said this).
- Need to make sure the grade level students are in their right grade level and matches their ability (2 participants said this).
- Building Hope students come with a pile of work that they don't understand how to do, and the teachers are aware of that- which causes frustration for the students, staff, and tutors.
- Concerned about safety – communication vague - when parents get calls with concerning information it needs to be more detailed!

- Need to control what students are bringing in their backpacks – maybe metal detectors for high schoolers (2 participants said this).
- Parents learn things about their kids' schools from the news before the school calls and informs them about the concerning information.

NCAE Teachers: Pitt County's Chapter 4/21/22 (Virtual)
12 Participants

1. What are Pitt County Schools doing really well?

- The school system is creating an office of equity and we are excited to see where that goes.
- Adding bonuses helps teachers and staff feel valued.
- COVID-19 numbers are dropping.
- Also, teachers get paid for subbing for other teachers.
- The school system is doing a good job analyzing students' needs and providing services/ resources to meet them - trying to do right by their students.
- The school system is doing a good job recognizing problems and finding a fix for them.
- Trying to do right by their students.
- The district is doing a good job trying to open up a pathway of growth for Teachers Assistants.
- The local grow your own principal fellowship program.
- The ability to grow teacher leadership through the teacher leadership process, and it doesn't mean you have to move up in positions but can grow as a leader.

2. What is the most pressing need facing Pitt County Schools right now?

- They need to re-district – class sizes are very unbalanced, racially and economically.
- Staff need to have technology available to take home so they don't have to rely on their personal devices – all students have devices, so all teachers need one too.
- Teachers need a good device to work on at school and at home – a device that battery life lasts longer than 30 minutes. (5 participants said this)
- Chrome books – teachers and media coordinators aren't able to focus on their jobs because they are having to deal with student chrome books – need to go back to class sets for students – it's been a big headache for media staff & teachers (at least in middle schools).
- Teachers need a Pitt County issued device to meet students' needs by working with them one to one.
- Staff WIFI doesn't work like it should on workdays – why doesn't the WIFI work during workdays, causing teachers not to be able to do their job?
- Temperatures are not controlled during the summer, causing custodians to be without air conditioning while doing strenuous jobs like stripping floors and doing other facilities work. There is often no air conditioning in the summer and no heat in the winter, during times when students are not in the building.
- Pitt County needs to focus on staff comfort more than saving money. (7 participants said this)
- When the students leave at the end of the day, the air conditioning and heat get turned off- so while staff are working at school, they don't have air conditioning or heat so why would they want to stay late and work, when it's so uncomfortable for them?

3. What does equity mean to you, particularly when you think about it in an educational context?

- I think equity means my students have a chance to learn in a safe environment.
- Students having the opportunity and access to learn in the best way possible for them.
- I think sometimes students have opportunities to learn but might not have access
- Opportunity for all, regardless of your location.
- Students needs are different for every student and every grade level, and it's important to meet their needs
- Equity is about meeting every student where they are so we can get them as far as they can go
- When all students receive the resources they need to graduate and prepare for high school and beyond

4. If you or someone you know identifies as part of a minority group (for example: race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family with a student with special needs, family with at least one member who identifies as LGBTQ, etc.), describe your experience with Pitt County Schools as it relates to that part of your identity?

- Social workers play a key role in helping students go through the grief process, like when we had a young student who got into a car accident this year.
- Social workers have provided services like grief counseling, but also tangible resources like food and clothes.
- Staff tries to address all students as individuals. It is vital.
- There's a club at Rose high school called the Gay Straight Alliance, which provides a safe place for students for social interaction who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County?

- When issues do come up that concerns staff, and educators, we would like a seat at the table while discussing them.

Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County Community Conversations Report July 2021 – April 2022

*To obtain a copy of this report, please contact Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County at
(252) 758-1604 ext. 201.

**Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County
PO Box 2873
Greenville, NC 27836**