

MSCS ***SUPER SEARCH***



COMMUNITY INPUT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the findings from the exploratory research conducted by KQ Communications on behalf of the Memphis-Shelby County School (MSCS) Board. In December 2022 and January 2023, almost 5,500 respondents participated via the community survey, (n = 4,340 made up of parents, employees, and community members), student survey (n = 648), and/or community input sessions (n = 429). These 5,500 participants were asked about the state of the district as it is understood through their lived experience, in addition to the top superintendent characteristics.

The research identified trends, which were then divided into three categories with the following subthemes:

The state of the district

- Academics
- Teacher and staff support
- Safety and well-being

Qualifications

- Educator with experience in the classroom and an attention to academics
- Experienced in a large, urban district
- An MSCS and community-centered approach
- An advocate

Character traits

- Integrity, ethics, and transparency
- A visionary
- Strong, collaborative, compassionate listener
- Willing to make tough decisions to benefit the district

6

**Sessions
Held**

429

Attendees

4,988

**Survey
Responses**

BACKGROUND

At the start of the engagement series, KQ Communications met with individual MSCS Board members regarding the type of information they would like to learn from the public during the exploratory community input sessions and surveys, scheduled to run December through January.

Guiding research questions:

1. What is the state of the district as it is understood by students, parents, employees, and community members?
2. According to the participants, what are the top superintendent characteristics that can improve, maintain, or fix what's happening at MSCS schools?

To answer the board's questions, KQ Communications created, communicated and analyzed four community surveys (students, parents, employees, community members) and facilitated six community input sessions: MSCS Student Congress, Snowden School (districts 1-3), Southwind High School (districts 4-6), Parkway Village Elementary with a Spanish translator (districts 7-9), Kingsbury High School in partnership with MICAH with a Spanish translator, and the Board of Education.

Survey Purpose and Method

Purpose

The primary goal of the exploratory survey is to serve as a guide for the board on how to build the superintendent job description and as a compass during finalist interviews and decision-making. As a result of the board interviews, the following focus areas arose:

- District bright spots
- District challenges
- Students' futures envisioned
- Student skills necessary for multiple post-secondary opportunities
- Superintendent leadership qualities and character traits
- Operational questions, including communication styles and customer service from the superintendent and/or the district
- General input

Method, design, and communication

KQ Communications drafted the survey with board input before launching it on December 15, 2022, remaining open until January 23, 2023.

KQ Communications, in partnership with the MSCS Board and the MSCS Super Search Advisory Committee, began its survey promotion to include:

- Networking and word-of-mouth:
 - MSCS Super Search Advisory Committee
 - Community partners (e.g., Memphis Education Foundation, Teach for America, MICAH, Schoolseed, etc.)
 - KQ Communication owned lists (e.g., list of pastors)
- Internal communication via MSCS channels
 - Social media
 - Newsletter
 - Texts to parents & staff
- Internal communication via networks
 - Emails to principals
 - PTA/PTO members
- Media relations
 - Earned news stories
 - Earned media interviews/segments
- Event promotion (e.g., community input sessions)

- Radio ads
- Paid email distribution (e.g., Tri-State Defender, Memphis Business Journal)

Community Input Session: Purpose and Method

Purpose

KQ Communications facilitated six community input sessions on behalf of the MSCS Board. These sessions, ranging from 60–90–minutes, were for community members to speak directly to board members and provide feedback regarding the Super Search.

Community members had three ways to provide feedback:

- Handwritten notecards (anonymous or self-disclosed), which were provided at each meeting except the Student Congress session
- Verbal feedback at the microphone
- Digital feedback via Mentimeter, an anonymous crowd engagement platform

Similar to the survey, the goals for the community input sessions were to understand individual's relationships with the district (parent, employee, student, community member), to hear about their experiences with the district, identify key characteristics they were looking for from the superintendent, in addition to an open-ended "anything else?" section.

Method, design, and communication

The community input sessions took on a similar design to the survey. KQ Communications spoke with each board member to determine how they envisioned the purpose of the community input sessions. Input sessions were to resemble the survey in terms of our guiding focus areas (the state of the district according to key stakeholders, and the key characteristics stakeholders are looking for in a superintendent) with more emphasis on conversation.

With that in mind, a presentation was designed to ask the following questions:

- What is your relationship with MSCS? (*Student Congress question: What are the two best things about being an MSCS student?*)
- What brought you out today? (*Student Congress did not receive this question*)
- If you could make a wish list for the district, how would you prioritize your wishes?
- What are your top two characteristics you're looking for in a superintendent?
- Anything else?

Engagement strategies included:

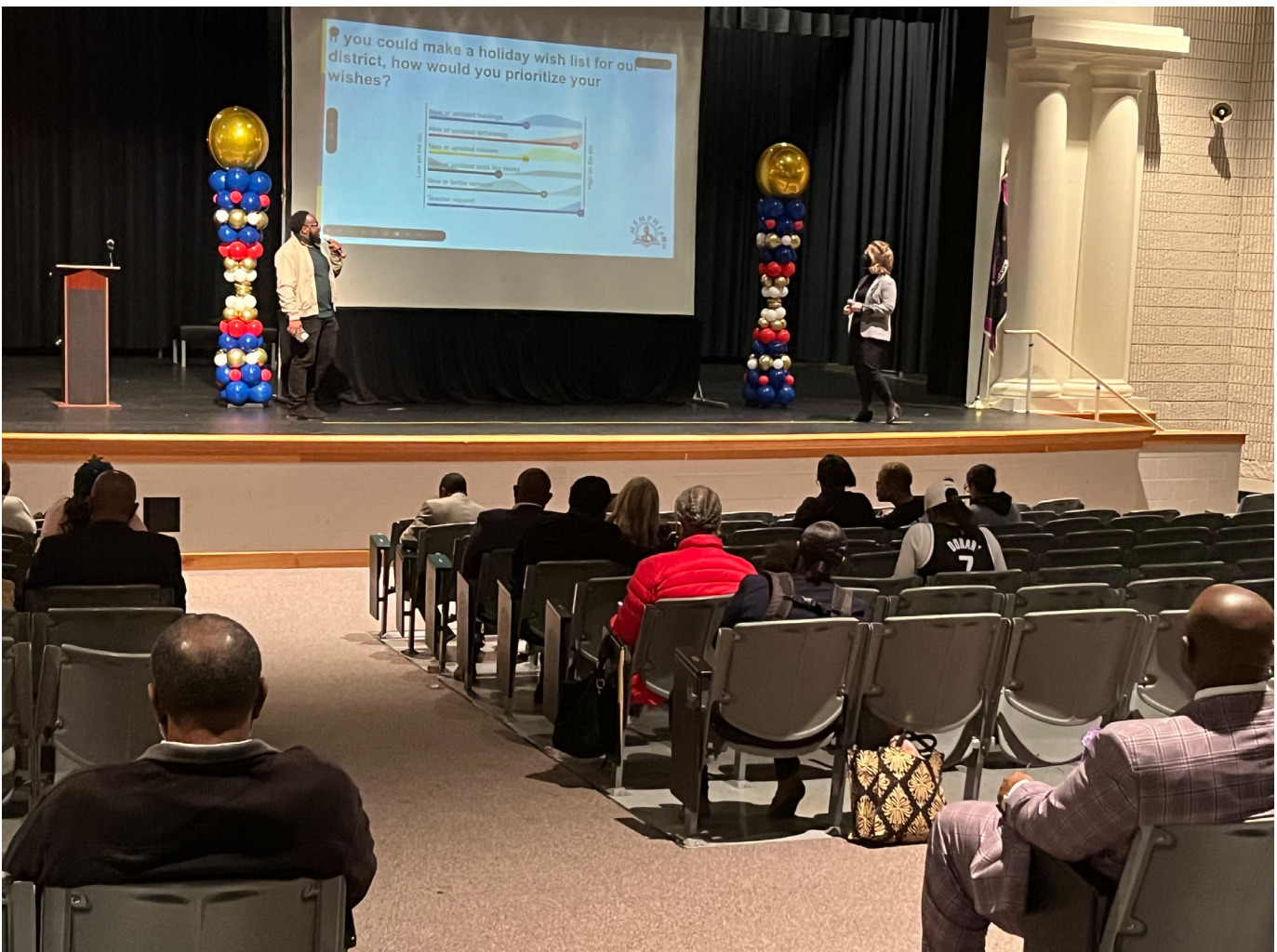
- Networking and word-of-mouth
 - Advisory committee
 - Community partners (e.g., Memphis Education Foundation, Teach for America, MICAH, Schoolseed, etc.)
 - KQ Communications owned lists (e.g., list of pastors)
 - Memphis-based calendars (e.g., Choose901, I Love Memphis, Memphis Parent)
 - Public Eventbrite
- Internal communication via MSCS channels
 - Social media
 - Newsletter
 - Text to parents & staff
- Internal communication via networks
 - Emails to principals
 - PTA/PTO members
- Media relations
 - Earned news stories
 - Earned media interviews/segments
- Event promotion (e.g., community input sessions)
 - Radio ads
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FINDINGS

Overall, the community members who participated in the exploratory survey and/or community input sessions identified key themes regarding their experience with the district (RQ1: the state of the district as understood by participants) and the key characteristics they felt the superintendent should embody (RQ2). These themes include:

- District Priorities: Academics, Teacher and Staff Support, and Student Safety and Well-being
- Superintendent Qualifications: Leading with Education at the Forefront
- Superintendent Character Traits: MSCS Super(intendent) Powers

The following section will combine all the stakeholder feedback (four surveys and six community meetings) to address overall what participants are looking for in the next superintendent. For an in-depth breakdown of each stakeholder group, see the appendix.



District Priorities: Academics, Teacher and Staff Support, and Safety and Well-being

The priorities of the district can be subdivided into three major categories:

- Academics
- Teacher and staff support
- Safety and well-being

Priority: Academics

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders want to prioritize academics above all. Academics was identified as one of the top two superintendent priorities, ranking as the top priority for parents, employees, and community members.

Academics was identified as both a strength and an area of improvement. As one employee said, "I am proud of the work from our District. Academics has been very notable with its strides. We need unity and for morale to increase. The leader HAS to unify." Academics broke into three subcategories:

- Back to the basics– a focus on literacy and core classes
- Inclusivity, specifically with bilingual students, students with disabilities/enrolled in special education classes, with attention paid to trauma
- Career, technical and enrichment education

Priority: Teacher and Staff Support

Another top priority for stakeholders was teacher and staff support. This priority manifested in the following categories:

- Compensation
- Collaboration (with parents, with other teachers, with superintendent)
- Confidence (let teachers teach)
- Morale

Employee compensation and improving staff morale were the top two most important priorities for MSCS employees. More teacher support was ranked as the second most important improvement the district can make according to community members.



Teacher and staff support: Collaboration. The idea of collaboration was one involving student-facing employees (teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff) with:

- The superintendent
- Each other
- Parents and the community

Teacher and staff support: Confidence. The phrase “let teachers teach” was a running theme throughout the qualitative data, both in the survey and during the community input sessions.

Teacher and staff support: All these things lead to better morale. Overall, most participants understood that there is an issue with morale, for both employees and students.

These themes tracked in the survey as well, with 32% employees ranking “Feeling respected by the superintendent” as their top communication priority.

Priority: Safety and Well-Being

The final priority, which overlaps with the other two priorities, is acknowledging the importance of safety and well-being. This theme was most frequently discussed in terms of:

- School environment
- Mental health
- Violence/School-to-Prison Pipeline

Safety and well-being: School environment. The learning environment was an area of concern for many participants, including students.

Safety and well-being: Violence and the school-to-prison pipeline. Safety scored as one of the most important priorities for students, employees, parents, and community members on the survey. It ranked as a top priority for students at almost 38%. Parents of high school students, employees, and community members ranked safety as the second most important area of improvement.

Safety and well-being: Mental health. Lastly, for many stakeholders, all the previous issues highlighted—academics, teacher appreciation and autonomy, the learning environment, violence— are all linked to mental health. As one student put it: “it can be bad for the mindset.” During the student congress input session, students talked about wanting a superintendent who understands the stress and will prioritize mental health.

Superintendent Qualifications: Leading with Education at the Forefront

This section of the report explores the ideal qualifications of the new superintendent. Overall, these qualifications can be categorized as:

1. Educator with experience in the classroom and an attention to academics
2. Experience in a large, urban district
3. An MSCS and community-centered approach
4. An advocate

Qualifications: Educator/experience in the classroom.

Many participants acknowledged the advantage of having a superintendent with teaching experience. Given that academics was at the top of most priority lists, stakeholders want to see great attention to academics.

At the Parkway Village Elementary community meeting, a principal addressed how important classroom experience is:

- “In order for us to move the needle, which is student achievement and growth, we need someone who knows instruction. And I believe that if they know instruction, they can better support the teachers and administrators to do their job efficiently.”

Other employees are looking for the same:

- “We need new leadership from a proven educator!!!”
- “I’d like to see a superintendent, who is not political, but an educator, not too far out of the classroom.”
- “I want the MSCS superintendent to be a veteran teacher who understands the role of educators across the city. Too often these positions are given to people who do not have the experience or understanding of what being a teacher truly entails. Teachers see this as a dig to our profession and a lack of trust in the capabilities of educators.”

Parents wrote:

- “I want someone with experience as an educator, including classroom experience.”
- “It is imperative that our next superintendent be an educator not an attorney, accountant, nor business person! Over the years, decisions have been repeatedly made that aren’t educationally sound nor child centered. Decisions that aren’t best practices in education. ”
- “Superintendent must be an educator at heart.”
- “We need a leader who will ensure his cabinet has the right subject matter experts who can work strategically to improve academics.”
- “I need a superintendent that knows academics.”
- “The academics need to improve so my child can thrive in a competitive, ever-changing world. Priorities should be on knowledge, creativity, and life-long learning in a safe environment.”

Community members said:

- “If we value education, we need a highly trained educator as leader.”
- “The new Superintendent needs to be an educator with successful teaching experience.”
- “We need someone who was a former educator who is in tune with what’s going on.”
- “We need an educator, who is politically savvy and able to inspire teachers and students.”
- “We need a leader that will make sure we improve our academics and be transparent about fixing things when they are broken.”

Qualifications: Experience with a large, urban district.

Many participants are looking for a superintendent who understands the unique issues that come with leading a large, urban district.

Employees wrote:

- “Needs to be someone who understands our students and our teachers from a professional perspective but also from a Memphis/urban community perspective.”
- “The new Superintendent should have an unwavering commitment to the students of Memphis. They should have multiple experiences teaching in an urban setting.”
- “The superintendent needs to be an educator with more than 15 years of experience in public education. The superintendent should hold a doctoral degree in education leadership with a proven track record in student achievement. The superintendent should have know-how of operational needs in an urban school district. The superintendent should be an excellent communicator and relationship rebuilder. The superintendent should have a successful proven track record in teaching in an urban public school district.”



Parents said:

- “We need a highly qualified, ethical individual who has training and experience in a large urban district and isn’t just trying to advance their career.”
- “Really need someone from another large urban school district.”

Community members commented:

- “Successful leadership experience in a large school district.”
- “He/she needs to be smart and a proven manager of a large complex organization.”

Qualifications: Culturally-aware/An MSCS community-centered approach, with emphasis on students.

Related to experience with a large, urban district is finding a superintendent who is culturally-aware and going to lead with MSCS and the community at the center, especially students. As one student listed in their top characteristics, “City Pride.”

Students were very clear that this superintendent needs to be committed to them and their peers. They are most looking for consistency and a community-driven superintendent. Students talked about the stereotypes that face Memphis, but they see the potential and want the new superintendent to as well.

Students told us:

- “Whenever I do say that I’m from Memphis, they [outsiders] get this general impression that Memphis is such a bad area because of all the crime that happens... that Memphis is horrible. But I don’t feel like that, I feel like Memphis is very strong and it’s very smart, mostly because of the students that are here today and the ones in our schools... And you know, moving forward, I want to put a positive light on this. So we’re not living on as the worst city but one of the smartest cities.”
- “We’re just here to let you know that not to give up on this, we still have hope as this group of students. You see that we are the voice of Memphis-Shelby County Schools. We’re the voice of ambition, of opportunity, of change, just don’t give up on us and we see the crime as well and that’s why we’re voicing our opinions in order to change for our generation and our future children. So don’t give up on us, we still have hope.”



Parents wrote:

- “Being culturally aware and understanding is increasingly important.”
- “Cultural Relevant Pedagogy should have been an option for improvement.”
- “The students deserve a curriculum that is relevant, reliable, out of the box, truly incorporates the arts, cultural and community relevant. The Superintendent needs to be willing to take risks to push for out of the box teaching...”
- “We need someone who understands the different cultural needs for families and students, providing educators and staff with the tools and information to create environments sustainable and conducive to learning.”
- “Putting bilingual teachers and building in opportunities for bilingualism for students is important to me.”

Community members said:

- “It’s important that the superintendent understands the culture of all student demographics within the communities served within MSCS.”
- “Multicultural/Multilingual to model behavior for the rest of the district.”

Qualifications: An advocate.

Stakeholders are also looking for an advocate. This is a person who is building an inclusive strategy (i.e., equitable for all students) and can advocate for students, employees, and the community at the internal, local, state, and federal level.

Parents wrote:

- “I want to see a superintendent who cares and is an advocate for the special Ed students and Latino community.”
- “I want to see a superintendent with a reputation for centering students, honoring teachers, and partnering with the community.”
- “Our next superintendent should be focused on being ethical, kind, and an advocate clearly for teachers and students.”
- “Need someone to focus on... Equity in education at all schools regardless of neighborhood and lower class size....”
- “A leader who cares to implement equity and inclusion is very much needed.”

Community members said:

- “The superintendent will advocate at the state and federal level to stop constant testing practices.”
- “The Superintendent should also be an advocate of career-connected learning and furthering

student participation in early postsecondary opportunities such as dual enrollment and dual credit, so that students are equipped with a postsecondary credential before high school graduation.”

- “The Superintendent must excel at being an advocate for the students, families, employees & their families.”
- “I believe to produce well-rounded, intelligent, educated students/ young adults, the priority of parental and community inclusiveness is imperative to the success of an educational system.”

Employees are looking for an advocate at the district office as well:

- “I am a librarian. As we are not classroom teachers, I think we are often overlooked and invisible, and I want district administration to understand the specific challenges we are facing... I want to have a superintendent who will not only be aware of our concerns but advocate for us. I want a superintendent who will make libraries a priority. Right now, it feels like we’re at the bottom of the list...We need a superintendent who understands’ librarians’ roles in promoting literacy and gives us schedules and staff support to complete our jobs without burning out.”
- “The super would preferably have a long career in the classroom, with evidence proving their effectiveness as an educator. They should meet with teachers regularly and advocate for their needs.”

Survey and community input session participants included experience with industries outside of education, such as business or nonprofit as part of advocacy. These diverse leadership skills will help the superintendent lead, manage, and advocate for students and employees, and inform the superintendent’s financial decision-making.

Parents said:

- “The ideal individual has significant business acumen and will lead the district as the business it is and delegate the academic responsibilities to his staff.”
- “And as much as I hate it, they need to be a bit of a fundraiser to address shortfalls in some of our schools. Donors Choice has way too many Memphis teachers trying to get basic supplies for their students.”

Community members expressed a strong desire to see a business-minded leader in the position:

- “Look for candidates with business or large nonprofit backgrounds.”
- “It is important for the superintendent to be an excellent project manager with positive goals and reporting these to the community, along with a report card to show if and how the goals are being attained. Ethical behavior with sound business principles and morals to show the community how to behave appropriately. Modeling is important.”
- “This person must be a strong instructional leader and have a sense of business.”
- “They should be an educator and business person.”
- “So let’s focus on what it takes to lead a \$1B business that is responsible for educating 100k future leaders of a southern city in a red state in a global economy.”
- “We need a politically savvy superintendent who can work strategically with the board, teachers, parents, students, business, other government bodies, etc.”
- “The Superintendent must excel at coordinating massive fund-raising.”

Employees were split, however:

- “Try recruiting a business leader that has CEO experience.”
- “A superintendent rather than just an educator, needs to be a community business leader.”
- “We need someone that is committed to the business of helping our schools, our employees, and our community with educating the children and providing opportunities to be successful.”

Notably, employees also wrote that it’s important for the superintendent to avoid getting too wrapped up in the business side of things and treating the district like a “for-profit business.”

- “The superintendent needs to be someone who can’t be bought by educational companies or insurance companies; not afraid to make visits to schools; and doesn’t treat the district like a for profit business.”
- “It would be great if the school were treated as a school and not a business.”

Superintendent Character Traits: MSCS Super(intendent) Power

The final section focuses on the character traits of the superintendent. These traits emerged as the top four:

1. Integrity: Ethical and transparent
2. A visionary
3. Strong, collaborative, compassionate listener
4. Willing to make tough decisions to benefit the district

Character traits: Integrity, ethics, and transparency.

Survey participants were asked to rank characteristics of the next superintendent. The options were:

1. Community-driven
2. Ethical
3. Culturally aware
4. Discipline
5. Transparent
6. Kind
7. Lots of degrees
8. From Memphis/Shelby County
9. Well connected to employment opportunities for students
10. Politically savvy
11. From outside of Memphis/Shelby County
12. Tough

Across the board, parents, employees, and community members ranked “ethical” and “discipline” as the top two characteristics (see appendix C, D, E). Looking directly at how business leaders (who had the option to take one of the three surveys) ranked their top characteristics, “ethical” and “discipline” ranked as the most important, too. This tracks with the most popular word used during the community input sessions: “integrity.”

Where the superintendent is from (outside of Memphis/Shelby County or from Memphis/Shelby County) – along with toughness– were not priorities for parents, employees, community members, or students (see appendix B, C, D, E).

At the student congress session, a student spoke about what characteristics resonated with them and their team (after they were prompted to pick a top five from the word cloud):

- “We have the first thing as integrity, we want to have someone who does the right thing, even if we’re not looking, who’s like trustworthy with our staff and students and we know that we can come to them, around people and make the right decision for all of us.”

Another student who attended the Board of Education meeting is looking for someone who is “transparent,” a word that came up frequently in combination with “integrity.” “I want someone that is transparent, can tell me, you know, ‘Hey, I don’t think we willn’t be able to do this, I don’t think we’re gonna be able to do that. But I’m working with you to get this done. I’m doing my best.’ That’s what I think that we need as a superintendent.”

Employees expressed similar sentiments to the students:

- “We are in need of transparency and ethics, and the unethical behavior and decisions of prior administrations needs to be corrected.”
- “We just need ethical, transparent, strong, community-centered leadership. We are a public institution, and we should act with public well-being in mind and heart.”
- “Transparency and the demonstrated ability to do the job in an ethical and culturally aware manner. Fiscal awareness. responsibility, and intellect to ensure expenditures have students and staff at the forefront.”
- “It doesn’t matter if the new Supt. is from Memphis or outside Memphis! Integrity is the key! The person coming from outside Memphis most likely will blend in with the old, then you have the same! If they come from Memphis–they will blend in with the old, then you still have the same!”

We need someone who is willing to make some needed changes so we don't end up with the same! Do the same, get the same results."

Parents agree that ethics, integrity, and transparency are key traits:

- "I think whoever is chosen should be ethical and able to do the job. They should prioritize the students, faculty, and community."
- "New super should lead by example. Present image of trust, integrity, fairness and code of conduct upheld. Be timely in decision making, forthright in discussion ; solid in ethical matters. Come equipped to develop teachers as a team across all schools. Develop every school with standards and an atmosphere of higher learning. Develop a culture across all schools type and degree of discipline for each infraction whether by student, teacher, staff or principals."

Community members wrote:

- "Above all integrity, ethical and an excellent role model to represent all our students and MSCS employees."
- "Look for someone who truly cares about children and has what it takes to educate and ethics to stand for what is right. We need someone who can't be bought and the agenda is children, not politics. Someone who cares about the staff and is fair. Able to stand up to the board offering balance."

Character traits: A Visionary.

Being creative, transformative, unapologetic, and thinking outside of the box are traits that students, parents, employees, and community members are looking for from the new superintendent. For example, students listed "visionary" four times at the student congress input session, and many students put the word on their top five list.

Students explained:

- "I want my emphasis to [be on] visionary. You have to be able to see the things ahead and have plans to actualize it."

Students also talked about ambition, being open-minded, exciting, and fun. They see this new hire as an opportunity to redefine how a superintendent works with, and behalf of, students. One student wrote:

- "The superintendent should be the district's best friend. And just like a best friend, we should be able to trust, communicate, and rely on. They should also be fun like a best friend."

Having vision was also important to parents, employees, and community members.

Parents said:

- "Educational background, problem solver, visionary."
- "I want to see a superintendent with a reputation for centering students, honoring teachers, and partnering with the community. I want someone with experience as an educator, including classroom experience. I want someone who sees the assets and challenges of our students and city, and who has a vision for innovating our district. I want someone who is unafraid of disrupting local political structures in the best interest of students, but who is able to do that with diplomacy and efficacy. Memphis students deserve the best."

Employees wrote:

- "It is important that the new superintendent understands the cookie cutter approach is ineffective. I believe understanding that the implementation of initiatives for elem, middle & high school must be tailored to the structure, requirements, and needs of the different grade brands. Also, the new superintendent should be a visionary and not afraid to stir the pot if it means improving student achievement or teacher compensation."
- "Respect, vision, critical thinking, goodness and endurance are the disappearing qualities we have to ensure our students value and possess."
- "We need someone innovative, inspiring and hard working."

The community members are looking for someone who can be innovative in their approach:

- “Of course we want someone with great credentials, but it’s more about WHO the person is. When you hire someone, you’re hiring whoever that person is (character, traits, beliefs, core values etc). Hire someone who knows how to interact with people, who holds themselves to a standard of excellence even in their personal life, someone who understands people and has innovative ways to reach our youth and help them.”
- “He/she should be familiar with the Memphis community. Must be innovative and have strong leadership skills.”

Character traits: Strong, collaborative, compassionate listener.

Students really underscored the need for the new superintendent to be a strong and compassionate listener, and one who takes their feedback to heart.

Students wrote:

- “We need someone that’ll listen to all students and teachers. Though not everyone will receive what they want we need someone that’ll attempt to fight for us and make accommodations for all.”
- “Some[one] who listens to understand, not listen to respond. Someone who has a true heart for the students, teachers, administrators, parents and it’s community!”
- “It is not only the job of the superintendent, but all MSCS staff, to ensure the success of students, and this can only be achieved through mutual respect and growth via feedback and action on both ends. Please consider this, for the sake of our future.”
- “We need someone who listens!”

Community members also want someone who listens to teachers and students:

- “Someone that cares about teachers & how they know the best way to teach their students. Education over programs that cost millions & don’t help educate. Someone that is open to listening to teachers without scaring them into not being heard. They work overtime so you should too. Use money for district parties to ask teachers where that money could be spent in their classroom.”
- “Someone who listens to the teachers who are on the front lines.”

Employees wrote:

- “Listen to teachers instead of individuals who do not work with students to make decisions.”
- “New supt must be trustworthy. Must be willing to clean house at top and mid levels. And must listen to teachers. We must stay the course on initiatives instead of continually reinventing the wheel. Must find a way to retain good teachers who are exhausted and quitting.”
- “Our new superintendent must be able to listen to and support teachers in the district. We are on the front lines and know what our students need. This school system can soar if our teachers are respected and treated as the professionals we are.”
- “Listens to educators and truly love to see kids succeed.”

Parents agree:

- “Work as a team. Listen to others with respect.”

Character traits: Can make tough decisions to better the district.

Survey and community input session participants identified these traits: integrity, transparency, ethics, vision, and strong listening skills– in addition to the qualifications of an educator with academics at the forefront who is a culturally-aware advocate–as the ingredients to set the new superintendent up to make tough decisions to better the district. Students, parents, employees, and community members are looking for a superintendent who will center students, teachers, and staff in their decision-making, take strategic risks, and be unapologetically MSCS. The overwhelming majority of student, parent employee

and community stakeholders agreed with the sentiments below.

Students said:

- “The most important goal of a superintendent is to see their students succeed. Successful students bring good fortune to the schools, teachers, and the community. The only way for a company to prosper is to better their product. In the same way, the only way for schools to prosper is to better their students. Therefore, The Board should select a selfless superintendent who cares about students more than any rule or regulation that limits students.”

Parents:

- “I would like to see a Superintendent who has integrity and ability in equal measure. Someone who is willing to listen and do the right thing even if it means going against the status quo. Someone who places students’ needs above the need to “appear” as though they are achieving state compliance. Someone who does not waste resources by chasing quick fixes. Someone who will invest in MSCS for its long term success, and not just for the glory of short term accolades that do nothing but enhance their own career advancement opportunities. Someone who does not see MSCS as a stepping stone, but rather as an opportunity to grant all students access to an appropriate education that enables them to reach their potential and take their place in society as a ready graduate. Someone who takes charge and assumes responsibility for MSCS. Someone who will not appoint friends and associates to positions of authority, without proper regard to their qualifications, expertise, ability, and/or their track record.”
- “We need a leader who isn’t afraid to make the tough decisions to better the future for ALL our children and not just a few.”

Employees wrote:

- “The most important factor is that our new superintendent will be the leader, however, and setting the tone for how the district operates by establishing goals, managing faculty and staff, and ensuring that MSCS children are at the center of each decision.”
- “Every decision made needs to be around will this decision help our students learn to read and graduate high school. The district needs to be courageous enough to recognize there are programs/initiatives in place that are not working and stop those practices.”

Community members said:

- “[The superintendent needs to] be able to make difficult decisions while considering the needs of all stakeholders, and genuinely care about the students and employees.”



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This former MSCS teacher summarized a lot of what the community is looking for from the superintendent at the final community input session at the Board of Education:

“The word I put was integrity and vision. [What] I’m looking for in a leader, a proven leader, who leads with integrity, and humility, somebody who has demonstrated the ability to respectfully include teachers and decision making, and create authentic leadership opportunities in the places where they’re currently leading. I want somebody who’s an advocate for teachers who listens well to teachers and advocates for teachers.

There are so many effective teachers I have trained in the last 10 years, 15 years, leaving this district... I was talking to one who has been in the district for 10 years, and is unbelievably effective, and cannot imagine staying another year. And like I can’t afford for my kids to lose that kind of teacher in high school.

So as somebody who centers teachers in their decision making, who includes community leaders and sees parents as partners, I want somebody who is able to lead with a strategic vision, who’s able to make hard decisions with transparency to achieve that purpose, somebody who models integrity in their interactions at every level with the people in their office and their staff and building leaders in the community.

I want somebody who’s able to work together with government, faith and business leaders, to support students holistically across the city to create opportunities for students that do not currently exist, and to identify current opportunities and amplify them so that more students have access to those great opportunities that already exist in our city.

I want somebody who is able to both make healthy alliances and disrupt broken systems with integrity and vision. I want somebody who knows who has been an educator, and who knows how to create learning communities. Somebody who creates learning environments that center inclusion, create safe spaces for learning, and advance equity. And [someone] who models that in their office and can model that for the district.

I want somebody who has authentic curiosity as a learner who can find what’s working best in our schools, and also find what’s working best in other places, and bring both of those things together and figure out meaningful, practical ways to advance that for our students. And finally, I want somebody who sees there are no such thing as other people’s children. They’re all our kids”.

APPENDIX

A Survey by the numbers 20

B Student Survey Findings 21

C Community Survey Findings: Parents 22

D Community Survey Findings: Employees 24

E Community Survey Findings: Community members 26

F Community Input Sessions Findings: A summary 28

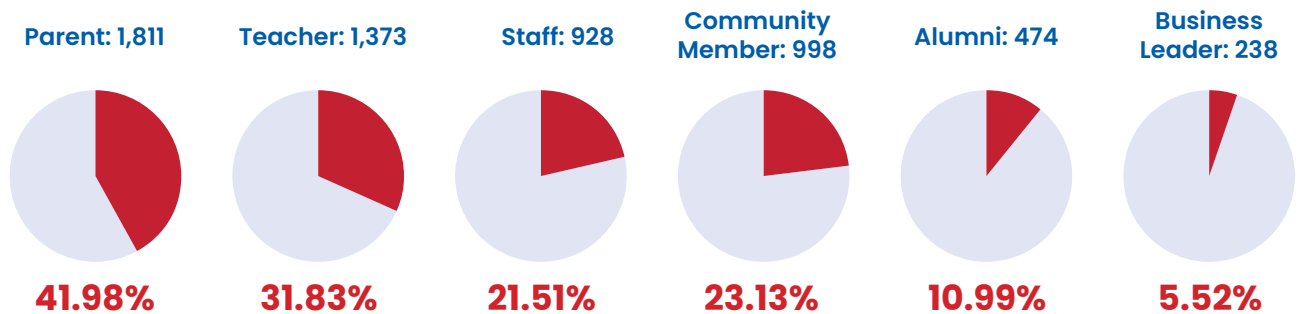
APPENDIX A

Survey Findings: By the numbers

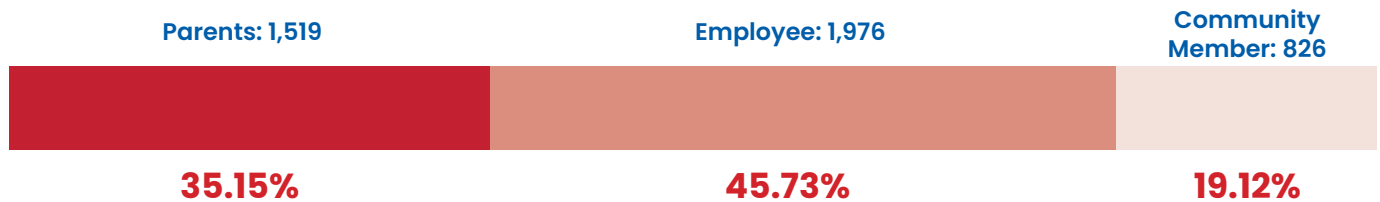
Survey opened on **December 15, 2022** and closed on **January 23, 2023**

Total participants: **4,340**

Relationship with MSCS (*participants could choose more than one, so percentages do not add up to 100%*)



- Surveys completed (*once participants identified their relationship with the district, they were prompted to pick one of three surveys to fill out*)

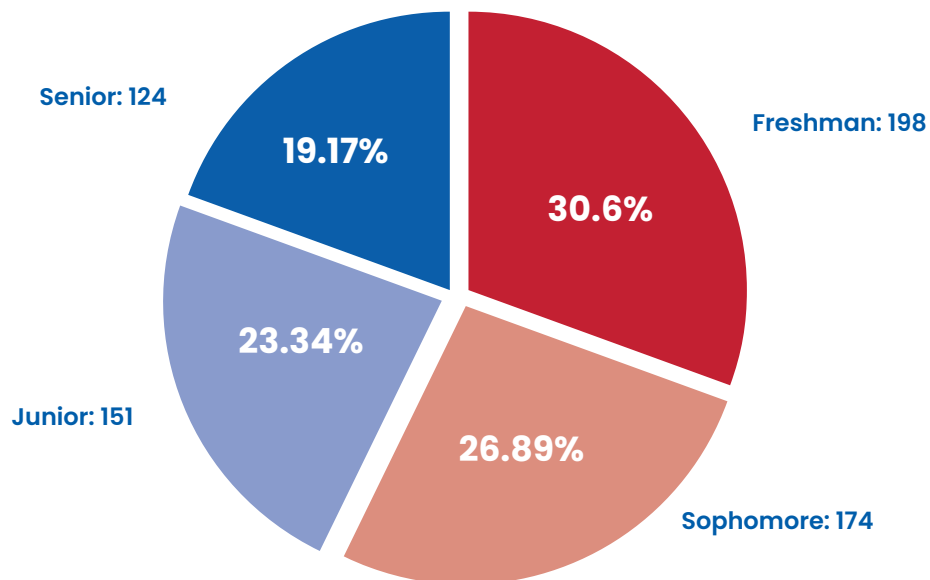


Student Survey (high school students)

Survey opened on **December 15, 2022** and closed on **January 23, 2023**

Total participants: **648**

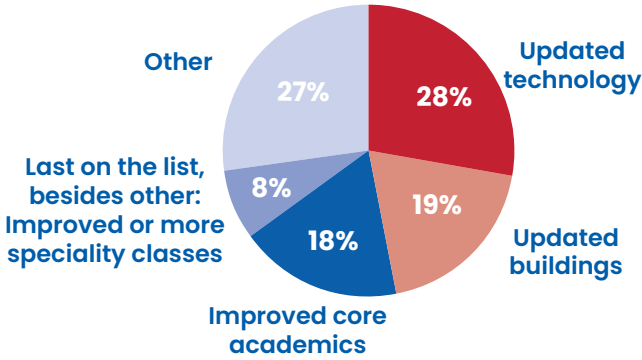
Grade:



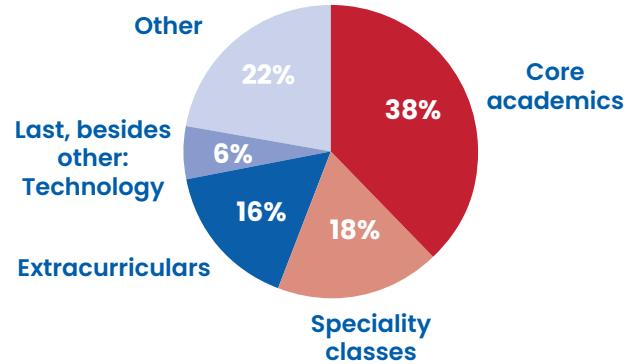
APPENDIX B

Survey Findings: Students

What's the most important thing your school needs:



What is your school doing well?



Important goals (*top two*):

Travel the world

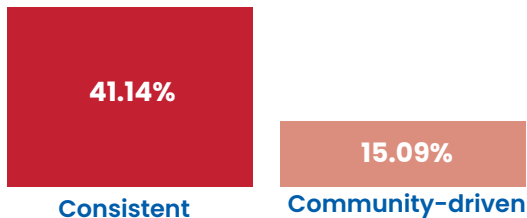
CEO of a large corporation

59%

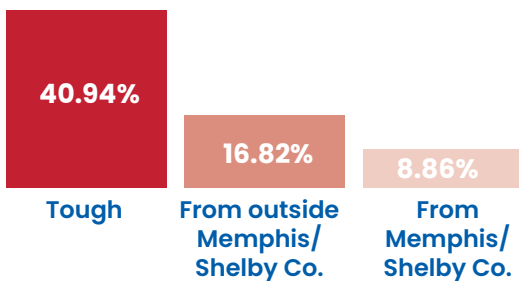
40%

Please rank the superintendent leadership skills that help achieve those goals (1-12):

Top two characteristics most ranked at number 1:

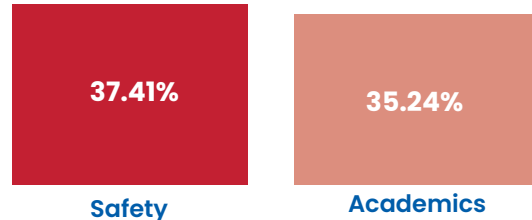


Lowest priorities:

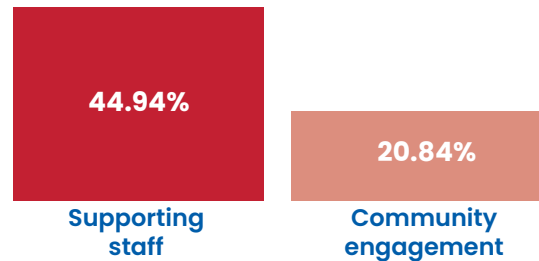


Issue prioritization (1-7):

Top two ranked at number 1:



Bottom two ranked at 7:



Most important student-superintendent relationship (*top two*):

Someone who listens

Respect

27.84%

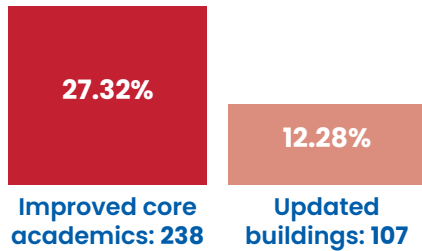
22.94%

APPENDIX C

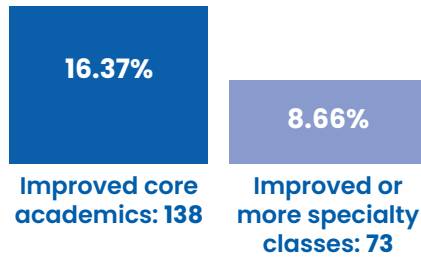
Survey Findings: Parents

1. What is the most important improvement your child/children's school needs (*top two*)

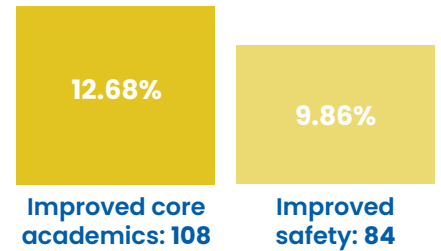
Elementary school children:



Middle school children:

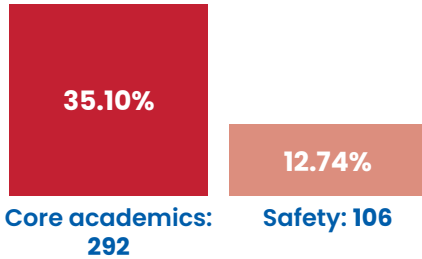


High school children:

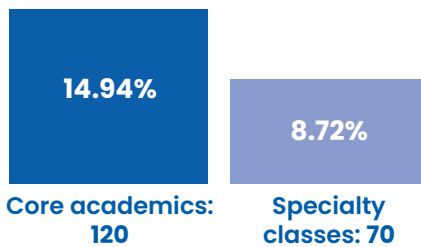


2. What is your child/children's school doing very well?

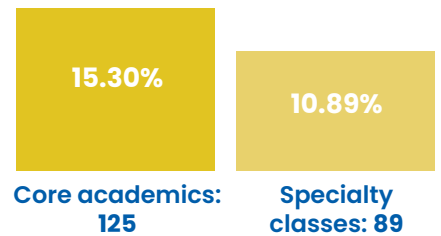
Elementary school children:



Middle school children:



High school children:



3. Priorities of child's future (*top two*)

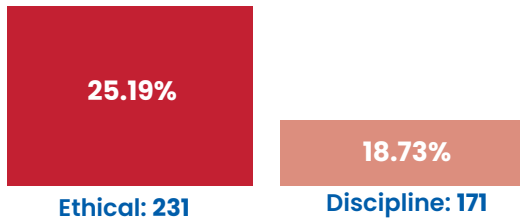
Child can send their children to college debt-free: 494

Travel the world with their partner: 264

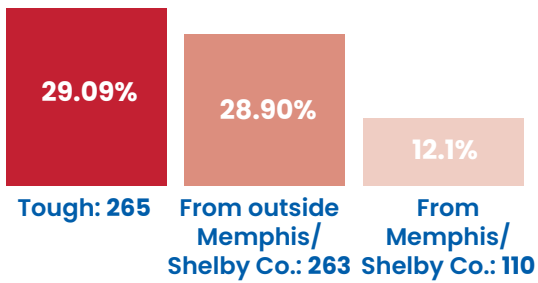


4. Rank superintendent skills

Top two ranked at #1:

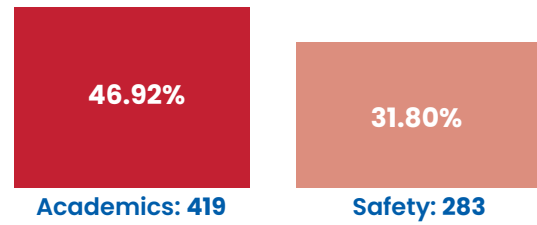


Lowest priorities:

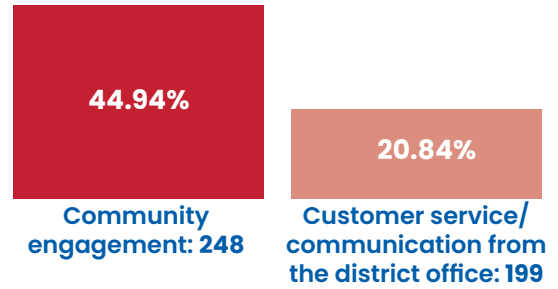


5. Rank issues:

Top two ranked at #1:



Most popular ranked last:



6. Communication between district and parents (*top two*)

Timely communication about opportunities and events: 293

Receiving consistent updates about the district news via email: 209

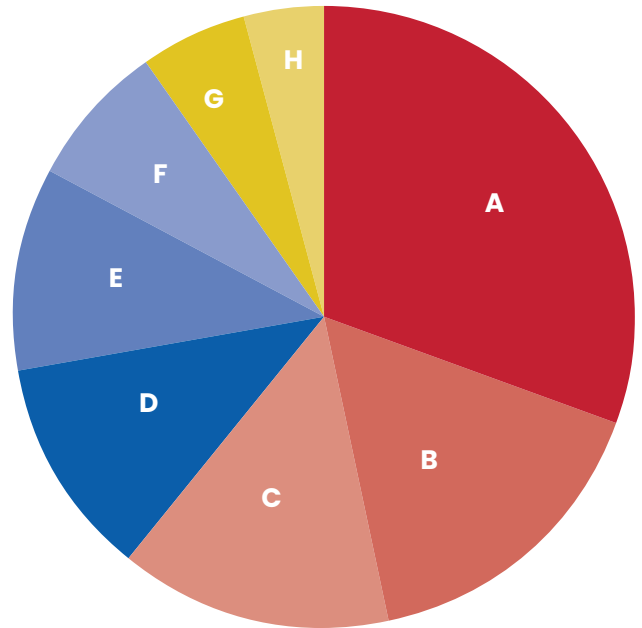


APPENDIX D

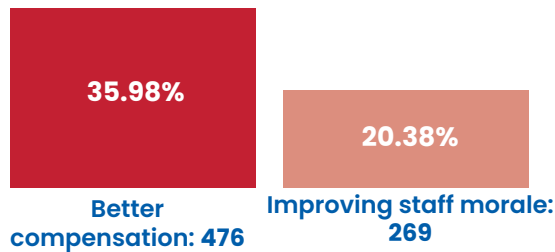
Survey Findings: Employees

1. Sample

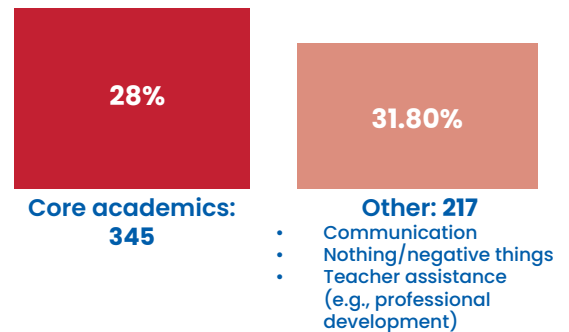
- A. Elementary teacher: 405 (30.73%)
- B. High school teacher: 211 (16.01%)
- C. District office staff: 186 (14.11%)
- D. Other: 151 (11.46%)¹
 - i. Teacher (e.g., substitute, teacher assistant)
 - ii. School counselor
 - iii. Staff (e.g., works more than one school, cafeteria)
 - iv. Support (e.g., IT, ReSet Assistant)
 - v. Principal (e.g., principal, assistant principal)
 - vi. Special Education
 - vii. Retired or former teachers and staff
 - viii. Mental health
 - ix. Interventionist
- E. Middle school teacher: 140 (10.62%)
- F. Elementary non-instructional staff : 97 (7.36%)
- G. High school staff: 74 (5.61%)
- H. Middle school staff: 54 (4.10%)



2. Most important issue (Top two):



3. What's the district doing well (Top two):



4. Goals for your students (top two)

Living and working in Memphis/Shelby Co.: 862

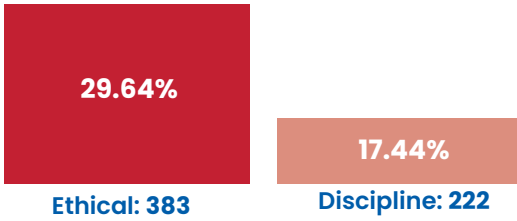
They send children to college debt free: 485



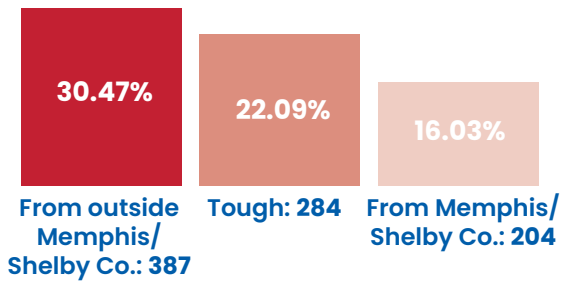
¹ We opted to not recategorize how individuals decided to self-identify

5. Rank superintendent skills

Top two ranked at #1:

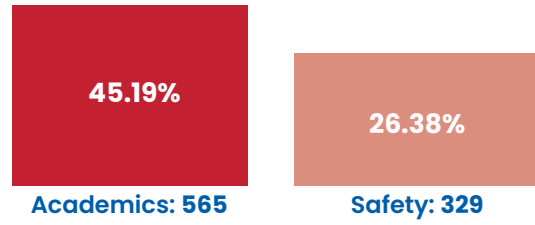


Lowest priorities:

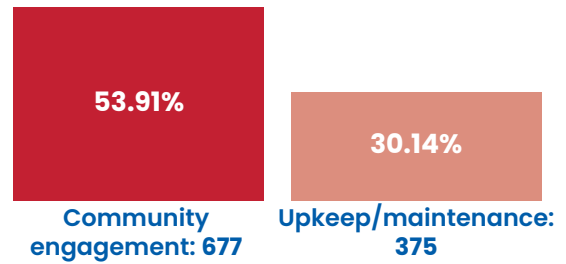


6. Rank issues:

Top two ranked at #1:



Most popular ranked last:



7. Top two communication styles

Feeling respected by the superintendent: 413

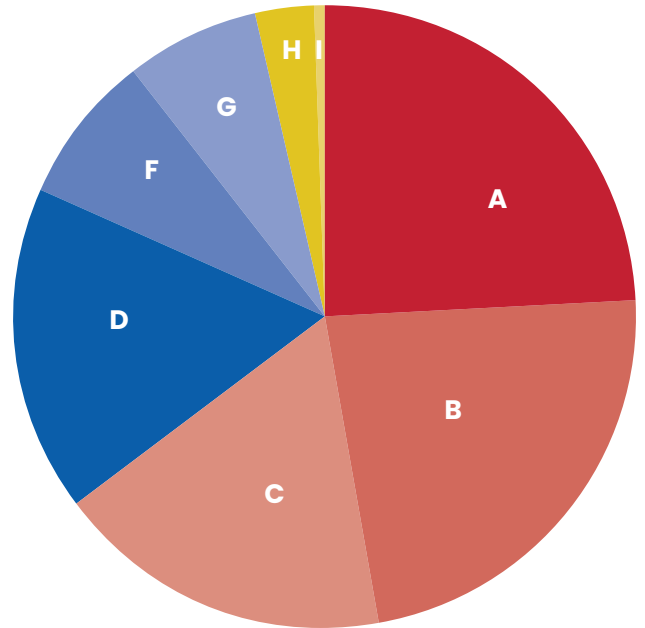
Receiving consistent updates about the district news via email: 288



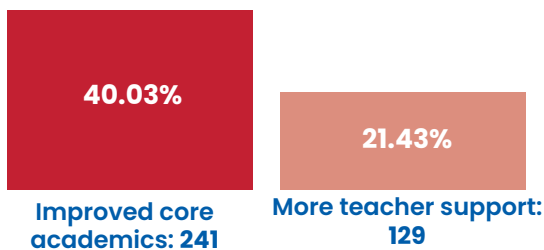
APPENDIX E

Survey Findings: Community Members

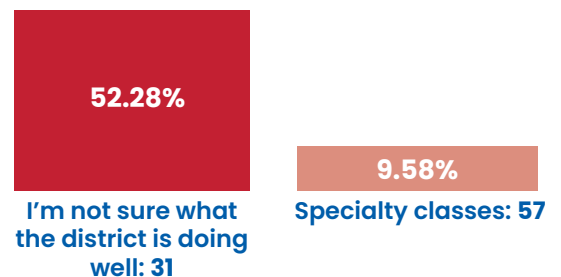
1. Sample: Relationship with MSCS
 - A. My taxes support MSCS: 377 (62.52%)
 - B. I'm an education advocate: 354 (58.71%)
 - C. I live close to an MSCS school: 272 (45.11%)
 - D. I'm an MSCS alumni: 258 (42.79%)
 - E. I'm related to an MSCS student (e.g., aunt, cousin, grandparent, etc.)
 - F. Other: 122 (20.23%)²
 - i. Former employee
 - ii. Retired employee
 - iii. Charter school
 - iv. Children graduated from MSCS
 - v. MSCS employees and students live in their community
 - vi. Future MSCS parent
 - vii. Relationship with MSCS employee (parent, spouse, friend, child)
 - viii. Contract vendor or consultant
 - G. Local business owner: 106 (17.58%)
 - H. I have a student-aged child who does not attend an MSCS school: 47 (7.79%)
 - I. I don't really have a relationship with MSCS: 8 (1.33%)



2. Most important improvement (Top two):



3. What's the district doing well (Top two):



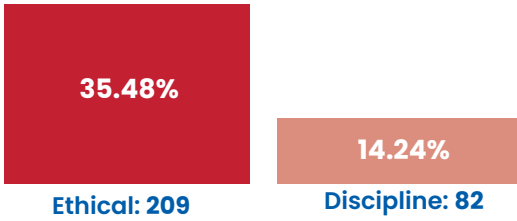
4. Goals for your students (top two)



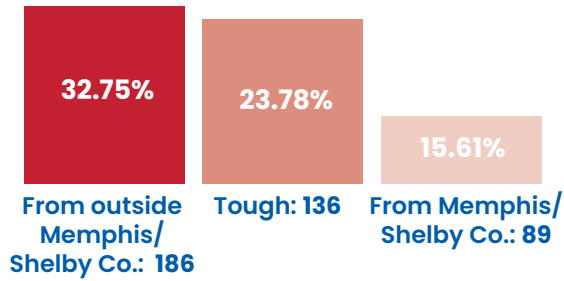
² We opted to not recategorize how individuals decided to self-identify

5. Rank superintendent skills

Top two ranked at #1:

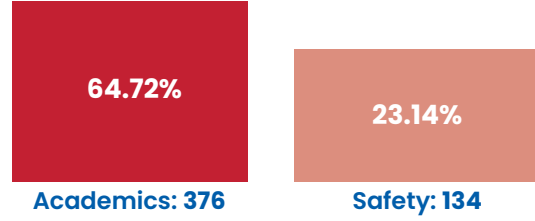


Lowest priorities:

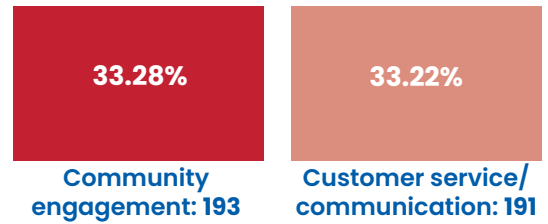


6. Rank issues:

Top two ranked at #1:



Most popular ranked last:



APPENDIX F

Community Input Session Findings Summary

Student Congress Input Session:

Dec. 6, 2022

What are the two best things about being an MSCS student?

- Opportunity
- Diversity

Wish list priorities: (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated building: 3.3
- New or updated technology: 3.2
- New or updated speciality classes: 3.9
- New or updated books: 2.9
- New or better opportunities outside of school: 4.0

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Open-minded
- Considerate

Snowden School (District 1-3):

Dec. 8, 2022

What's your relationship with MSCS?

- Community Member
- Teacher
- More than one of these
- Parent
- Staff
- Student

What brought you out today? Top two:

- It's important as an MSCS employee
- Three-way tie:
 - I want to voice my opinion
 - I want to learn more about the search
 - It's important as a Memphian

Wish list priorities (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated buildings: 3.4
- New or updated technology: 3.7

- New or updated classes: 3.1
- New or updated tools like books: 2.9
- New or better services: 3.5
- Teacher support: 4.3

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Integrity
- Transparent

Southwind High School (District 4-6):

Dec. 15, 2022

What's your relationship with MSCS?

- Community Member
- More than one of these
- Teacher
- Staff

What brought you out today? Top two:

- It's important as an MSCS employee
- It's important as a Memphis/SC resident

Wish list priorities (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated buildings: 3.7
- New or updated technology: 3.7
- New or updated classes: 3.5
- New or updated tools like books: 2.9
- New or better services: 3.4
- Teacher support: 4.8

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Integrity
- Academic Knowledge

Parkway Village Elementary (District 7-9):

Jan. 12, 2023

Note: Spanish translator attended

What's your relationship with MSCS?

- Parent
- Teacher

- Staff
- More than one of these
- Community member

What brought you out today? Top two:

- It's important as a parent
- It's important as an MSCS employee

Wish list priorities (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated buildings: 3.3
- New or updated technology: 3.6
- New or updated classes: 3.4
- New or updated tools like books: 3.3
- New or better services: 3.1
- Teacher support: 4.0

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Integrity
- Honest

Kingsbury High School (in partnership with MICAH):

Jan. 19, 2023

Note: Spanish translator attended

What's your relationship with MSCS?

- Parent
- More than one of these
- Community member
- Teacher

What brought you out today? Top two:

- It's important as as Memphis/SC resident
- Voice my opinion about the search

Wish list priorities (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated buildings: 3.6
- New or updated technology: 4.0
- New or updated classes: 3.4
- New or updated tools like books: 4.2
- New or better services: 3.6
- Teacher support: 4.6

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Integrity
- Innovative

Board of Education:

Jan. 21, 2023

What's your relationship with MSCS?

- More than one of these
- Staff
- Teacher
- Parent
- Student
- Community member

What brought you out today? Top two:

- It's important as a Memphis/SC resident
- Three-way tie:
 - I want to voice my opinion
 - Want to hear what everyone else thinks
 - It's important as a parent

Wish list priorities (1- low priority, 5- high priority)

- New or updated buildings: 4.1
- New or updated technology: 3.7
- New or updated classes: 3.1
- New or updated tools like books: 2.9
- New or better services: 3.3
- Teacher support: 4.8

Top two superintendent characteristics:

- Integrity
- Accountable