DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

REPORT TO: Durham District School Board   **DATE:** November 6, 2023

SUBJECT: Update: Multi-Year Strategic Planning Process   **PAGE:** 1 of 6

ORIGIN: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary to the Board
Robert Cerjanec, Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives and External Relations

1.0   Purpose

This report is to provide the Board of Trustees with an update on activities related to the Multi-Year Strategic Planning process since the last update on June 19, 2023 and to outline next steps.

2.0   Ignite Learning Strategic Priority/Operational Goals

Success – *Set high expectations and provide support to ensure all staff and students reach their potential every year.*

Well-being – *Create safe, welcoming, inclusive learning spaces to promote well-being for all students and staff.*

Leadership – *Identify future leaders, actively develop new leaders and responsively support current leaders.*

Equity – *Promote a sense of belonging and increase equitable outcomes for all by identifying and addressing barriers to success and engagement.*

Engagement – *Engage students, parents and community members to improve student outcomes and build public confidence.*

Innovation – *Re-imagine learning and teaching spaces through digital technologies and innovative resources.*

3.0   Background and Analysis

The Ontario Education Act requires that every school board develop a Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) spanning a minimum of three years. The purpose of the MYSP is to help school boards articulate shared values, set long-term commitments, and establish strategic priorities. It is a compass that guides collective actions for ongoing improvement across the learning organization.

The DDSB's current MYSP, Ignite Learning, was adopted in 2018. The Ignite Learning Plan was extended through to December 31, 2023.

The work to establish a new strategic plan began in the fall of 2022. Reports were presented to the Board of Trustees on October 3, 2022, November 21, 2022, April 17, 2023, and June 19, 2023.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an external consultant was published through December 2022 and January 2023. In February 2023, a working group was formed to consider proposals and select a consulting firm. The working group was made up of four Trustee members,

the Director of Education, the Executive Lead of Strategic Initiatives and External Relations, and the Manager of Purchasing and Distribution Services. Together the working group determined that external consultant Maximum City, was the best fit to support Trustees through the strategic planning process.

An introductory session for Trustees and Student Trustees with Maximum City took place on March 1, 2023, with a focus on the following:

- Fundamentals of multi-year strategic planning, including the role of Trustees in the process, components of a strong strategic plan and the phases of strategic plan development;
- Best practices of strategic planning development and consultations;
- Timeline; and
- Proposal for a path for the work.

Development of the MYSP follows four phases, and we are presently working through Phase 3: Synthesis & Development, now that Phase 2: Consultation & Gathering Information has been completed.

Figure 1: MYSP Development Phases

Phase 1 – Review, Reflect and Visioning

Visioning sessions took place through April 2023, where Trustees, Student Trustees and senior staff had the opportunity to engage in workshops guided by the consultant to review the current MYSP, share aspirations, identify priorities for the next term, and work towards a draft direction for the new strategic plan.

Following introductory and visioning sessions, a Trustee Working Group was formed to guide the strategic plan consultation and development process. The Trustee Working Group was coordinated by Maximum City and is comprised of Trustees, Student Trustees, the Director of Education, both Associate Directors, and the Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives. In addition, a Staff Working Group with the consultant has been formed to ensure effective resourcing and coordination of the consultative process, communication plan, operational alignment and the back-end work required to develop the strategic plan.

Through April and early May, the working groups met to develop survey questions, a consultation plan and communication plan. The Trustee Working Group provided direction and clear feedback around the expectations for consultation. This resulted in a detailed and multilayered plan for consultation.
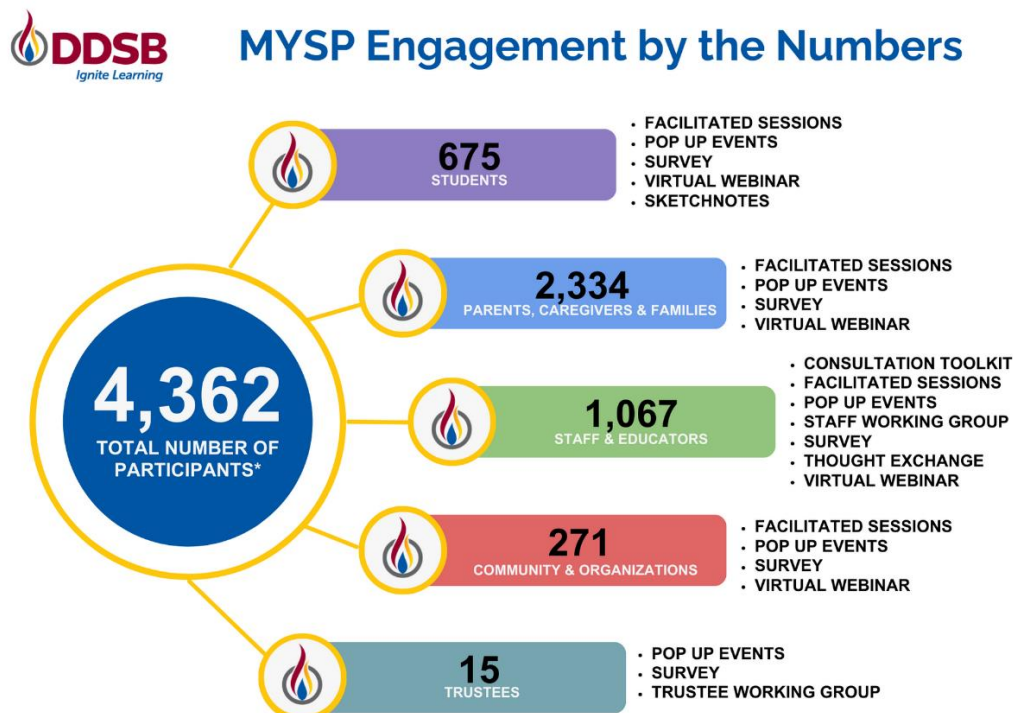
Phase 2 – Consulting and Gathering Information

The consultation period was launched in mid-May and closed in mid-October. An overall summary of engagement through Phase 2 is noted below and a detailed summary of engagement including methods of consultation, audience and type of feedback received is included in Appendix A, the Phase 2 Consultation Report.

Consultation strategies were informed by findings from external and internal board scans, aspirational thinking, and the lived experience of students, families, staff, and community members. The goal of the consultation phase was to involve and collaborate with as many individuals and groups connected to the DDSB as possible for the purpose of creating a strengthened plan developed through multiple engagement pathways.

Throughout Phase 2 the consultation process remained dynamic and progressive, with efforts taken to address any gaps in feedback. Follow-ups and additional reach outs took place in early-September to coincide with the start of the new school year to ensure that many groups and individuals had an opportunity to participate. This has helped to ensure a broad cross-section of members of the DDSB community have been consulted throughout Phase 2.

Figure 2: Engagement Summary

DDSB Ignite Learning

MYSP Engagement by the Numbers

4,362 TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS*

675 STUDENTS
- FACILITATED SESSIONS
- POP UP EVENTS
- SURVEY
- VIRTUAL WEBINAR
- SKETCHNOTES

2,334 PARENTS, CAREGIVERS & FAMILIES
- FACILITATED SESSIONS
- POP UP EVENTS
- SURVEY
- VIRTUAL WEBINAR

1,067 STAFF & EDUCATORS
- CONSULTATION TOOLKIT
- FACILITATED SESSIONS
- POP UP EVENTS
- STAFF WORKING GROUP
- SURVEY
- THOUGHT EXCHANGE
- VIRTUAL WEBINAR

271 COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATIONS
- FACILITATED SESSIONS
- POP UP EVENTS
- SURVEY
- VIRTUAL WEBINAR

15 TRUSTEES
- POP UP EVENTS
- SURVEY
- TRUSTEE WORKING GROUP

* Participants were able to provide feedback in multiple forums

Phase 2 was formally closed and completed on October 11, 2023.

Phase 3 – Synthesis and Development

Themes

Following completion of the consultation phase, all feedback collected has been analyzed by our consulting partners at Maximum City and nine themes have been drawn from the data (themes are listed below):

Indigenous Rights and Ways of Knowing

Advancing Equity

Dissatisfaction and Disengagement

Learning and Living in Community

Meaningful Learning

Multiple Pathways

Multi-Year Strategic Plan Structure and Monitoring

Staff Support and Development

Well-being and Knowing Your Students

Appendix A provides detailed descriptions and key words connected to the themes, the methodology applied throughout analysis, number of pieces of feedback collected directly relating to each of the themes, illustrative quotes, and additional themes drawn from analysis.

Phase 3 represents a critical time for the Trustee Working Group in progressing towards the final phase of MYSP development, which can take many iterations. In early October, while final consultation opportunities were nearing completion, an interim Phase 2 Consultation Report was presented for information and feedback to the Trustee and Staff Working Groups.

Next Steps

Draft recommendations for the new MYSP are in development and will be presented to the Trustee Working Group later this week to start the process of translating recommendations into strategic directions. A draft of the MYSP will then be developed and will go back to the Trustee Working Group for additional feedback. A community information session will take place via public webinar in November.

The November public webinar will provide an opportunity for the DDSB community to consider the themes developed through analysis of all feedback collected during Phase 2. Staff and the consulting team will be seeking confirmation through the webinar that what we heard throughout Phase 2 from students, families, staff, education partners and community groups is accurately represented in the nine themes and in the draft of the new MYSP. Adjustments will be made following the webinar as needed based on feedback collected. All members of the DDSB

community will be encouraged to attend the November webinar. It is not necessary to have provided feedback during Phase 2 in order to participate in the Phase 3 webinar.

The final draft of the new MYSP will be presented to the Board of Trustees in January 2024.

Phase 4 – Communication, Implementation and Monitoring

Following approval by the Board of Trustees, Phase 4 will formally begin.

Development of a District and community-wide rollout plan for the new MYSP will be developed for launch beginning in January 2024. Staff are currently compiling an inventory of all webpages, resources and other public and internal facing documentation that will need to be updated to incorporate the new MYSP.

A communications plan is in development which will aim to spread awareness of the new plan, reiterate key messages and embed the new plan in everything the DDSB does. The communications plan will consist of various forms of internal and external communication including e-mails, social media, web content, advertising, pitches to media outlets, videos and new virtual and printed materials that will be shared through departments and schools.

Once a new MYSP is approved and as part of Phase 4, staff will consider the key elements needed for an operational planning and reporting structure, taking into consideration examples from other school boards and the District's past practices. The senior team will collaborate and determine the key operational initiatives needed to implement the MYSP and provide an information report to the Board in 2024 on the work being undertaken across the District and initiatives underway.

4.0   Financial Implications

A budget of $95,000 has been allocated to the MYSP process and is estimated to include all costs associated with facilitation of consultations and the creation of the new strategic plan.

5.0   Evidence of impact

In the past, staff have provided reports to the Board of Trustees for information at three points in time throughout each school year related to the staff-led operational side of the multi-year strategic plan:

1. Fall Report, Annual Operational Plan – outlines key initiatives that form the focus of work across the District for School Operations and Corporate Services staff.
2. Update Report, Annual Operational Plan – provides a status update on work related to key initiatives.
3. Year End Report, Annual Operational Plan – a detailed progress update including outcomes and data from each key initiative.

Planning as part of Phase 4 will determine whether a similar or different staff-led operational plan structure will be implemented going forward.

6.0 **Communication Plan**

A Communication Plan was developed to inform our educational partners (students, parents/caregivers, staff, organizations, and community members) of the MYSP development process and opportunities to engage and provide input. The Communication Plan included promotion across DDSB's website, social media platforms, through email, an informational video, and internal and public meetings to raise awareness of the MYSP process and opportunities for engagement throughout Phase 2.

The MYSP webpage included links to the MYSP Survey for Students, Parents/Caregivers/Families and Community Partners/Organizations, a Facilitation Guide for self-directed consultations sessions, previous reports to the Board, a helpful Q and A section as well as contact information for further inquiries to dedicated MYSP voicemail and email.

As part of Phase 4 – Communication, Implementation and Monitoring, a detailed communication plan rolling out the new MYSP is in development.

7.0 **Conclusion and/or Recommendations**

This report is provided to the Board of Trustees for information.

8.0 **Appendices**

Appendix A: Phase 2 Consultation Report

Report reviewed and submitted by:

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Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary to the Board

_____
Robert Cerjanec, Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives and External Relations

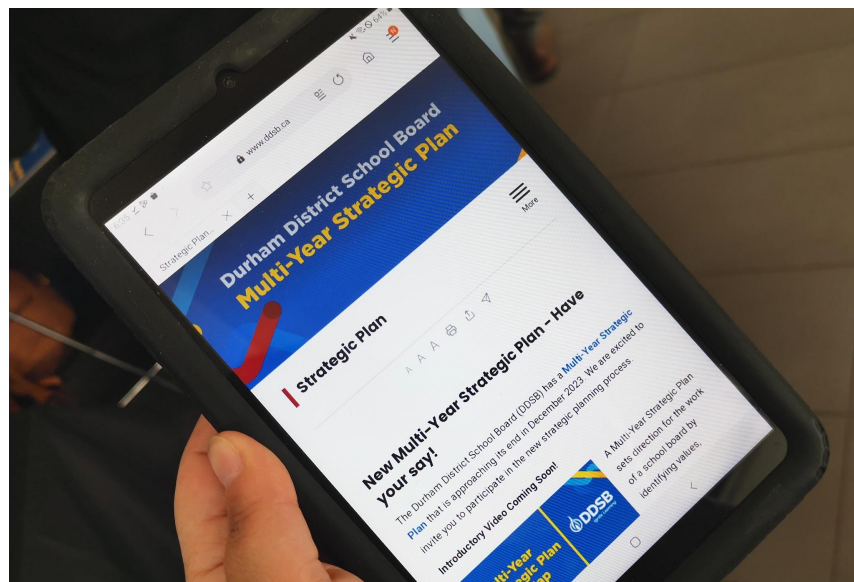# Durham District School Board MYSP

Phase 2 Consultation Report
November 2023

Prepared by Maximum City

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Introduction

Background

In February 2023, Maximum City was contracted by the Durham District School Board to assist with the development of its next Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP). This report summarizes the results of what we heard during the Phase 2 consultation, including a list of themes to inform the development of the new MYSP.

The development of the MYSP is following four phases, and we are currently in Phase 3.

Figure 1: MYSP Development Phases

WE ARE HERE.

| Phase 1:
Review, Reflect
& Visioning

Completed | Phase 2:
Consultation &
Gathering
Information

**Apr. to Sept.
2023** | Phase 3:
Synthesis &
Development

**Sept. to Dec.
2023** | Phase 4:
Communication,
Implementation
& Monitoring

> 2024 |

Development

Summary of Engagements

In collaboration with staff and trustees, Maximum City engaged students, staff, families, community members and organizations regarding their experience in the DDSB. From April through October, we led or supported more than 35 consultation forums with over 4,300 participants in both online and in-person modes, which are summarized in Table 1 below. Additionally, there were several consultations facilitated independently by DDSB staff. Available data from these sessions were included in our analysis for this report.

Table 1: Summary of Engagements

Method	Audience	Description / Purpose	Number of Participants* (*approximate for some events)	Date
Visioning Sessions (x2) & Visioning Survey (x2)	Trustees and Senior Staff	Establish a common vision and goals for the project	26	May 2023
Trustee Working Group (x2)	Trustees	Ongoing strategic support	15	May - June 2023
Staff Working Group	Senior Staff	Ongoing strategic and operational support	14	May 2023
Thought Exchange	School Leaders	Low-barrier digital forum for safely sharing ideas and feedback among school administrators	159	June 2023
Online Survey Conducted in six languages	All Participant Groups	Collect input from a broad audience of participants on their DDSB experience.	2,834	May - Sept 2023
Facilitated Sessions (x6) Led by Maximum City & DDSB Staff. Supported by DDSB staff & trustees	Key Participant Groups	Convene focused discussions with specific participant groups: ● Student Senate ● Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee ● Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) (DDSB-led) ● Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) ● Durham Region Anti-Racism Task Force ● Indigenous Education Advisory Committee	281	June - Oct 2023

Pop-Ups (x7) Led by Maximum City and supported by DDSB staff & trustees	All Participant Groups	Reach participant groups where they are already spending their time: ● Living Compendium Community Engagement Evening ● Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) & Durham Partners Symposium ● Cypher Black Male Empowerment Conference (DDSB-led) ● Student Art Gallery ● Summer School Sessions at Sinclair Secondary School (x3)	491	June - July 2023
Self-Facilitation / Group Consultations (x15) Led by DDSB and supported by staff & trustees	All Participant Groups	An invitation for a variety of groups to lead engagement through existing structures and events. Toolkit provided. ● Purchasing & Distribution Department ● Union / Federation Partners ● People & Culture Team ● Senior DDSB Team ● Keenanow Indigenous Employees Network ● Grade 2/3 Class Focus Group ● Elementary School Sketchnotes (x5) ● Black Fathers Network ● Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Conference ● Affinity Networks ● Durham East Asian Network of Employees	379	June – Sept 2023

Consultation Webinars (x2) Led by Maximum City and supported by DDSB Staff	All Participant Groups	Digital forum for informing and gathering feedback on key questions ● All-Staff Consultation ● Public Consultation	188	Sept 2023

Engagement by the Numbers

In total, over 4,300 participants provided nearly 12,000 comments through the various consultation forums. It should be noted that the totals do not represent unique respondents as the participants could provide input in multiple ways.

Figure 2: Engagement by the Numbers

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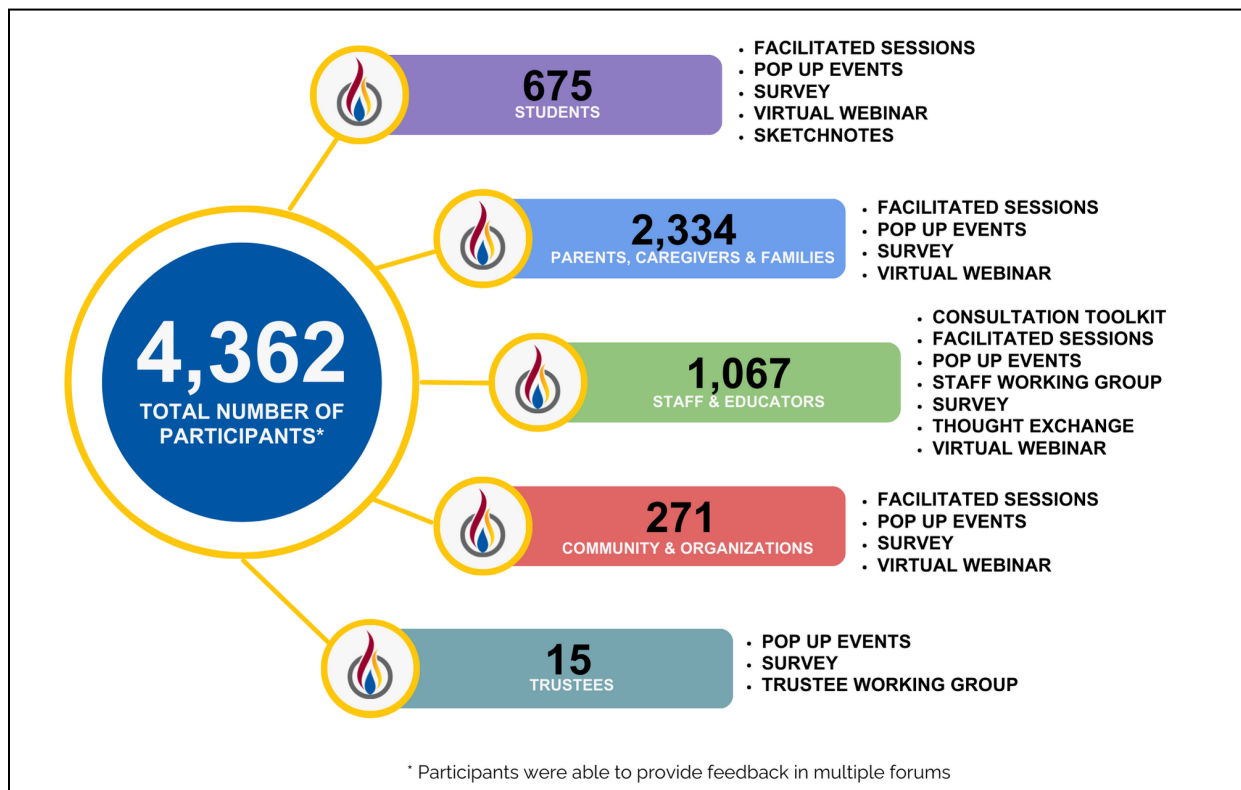* Participants were able to provide feedback in multiple forums

Image 1-2: Pop-Up Sessions at the Living Compendium

Image 3-4: Summer School Pop-Up Consultations at Sinclair Secondary School

Image 5: Pop Up at Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) & Durham Partners Symposium

What We Heard: Summary of Results

The nearly 12,000 comments from 4,362 participants represent a very robust qualitative data set from students, staff, parents, and community members that complements other quantitative measures in assisting the DDSB to develop a multi-year plan that is responsive to local needs, as per the Ministry of Education's recent memorandum on the *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*. In our experience as MYSP consultants, this compares favourably to the reach of consultation efforts in other southern Ontario school districts.

Through an analysis of the nearly 12,000 comments collected in the consultation period, we have identified the following **themes** in terms of common priorities, challenges, and values across participant groups to inform the development of the multi-year plan.

LIST OF THEMES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

- Advancing Equity
- Dissatisfaction & Disengagement
- Indigenous Rights & Ways of Knowing
- Learning & Living in Community
- Meaningful Learning
- Multiple Pathways
- MYSP Structure & Monitoring
- Staff Support & Development
- Well-Being & Knowing Your Students

Image 6: Pop Up at Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) & Durham Partners Symposium

Below is a count of consultation comments organized by the themes, followed by summaries of themes. It should be noted that the themes can and often do overlap. Many comments warranted two themes and were coded as such. Additionally, the table presents qualitative data quantitatively, which can lead to misinterpretation or overlooking the content in individual comments.

Table 2: Count of Themes by Participant Group and Number of Comments

	THEMES	Advancing Equity	Indigenous Rights & Ways of Knowing	Meaningful Learning	Disengagement & Dissatisfaction	Learning & Living in Community	Multiple Pathways	MYSP Structure & Monitoring	Staff Support & Development	Well-Being & Knowing Your Students	Additional Insights	Inflammatory Language	TOTAL
		1,582	140	3,606	569	4,105	344	212	2,927	2,944	122	44	16,595
STUDENTS	SUBTOTALS	39	2	868	109	582	195	1	168	557	43	4	2,568
	Survey	16	2	705	108	520	180	1	132	455	42	4	2,165
	Facilitation	23	0	163	1	62	15	0	36	102	1	0	403
PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS	SUBTOTALS	1,232	10	2,433	384	3,007	81	20	1,507	2,085	53	38	10,850
	Survey	1,151	9	2,342	381	2,866	75	19	1,439	2,028	53	38	10,401
	Facilitation	81	1	91	3	141	6	1	68	57	0	0	449
STAFF	SUBTOTALS	163	37	220	55	293	38	147	1,178	216	16	0	2,363
	Survey	94	3	158	53	130	10	6	930	150	15	0	1,549
	Facilitation	49	31	43	2	127	28	127	56	50	0	0	513
	Thought Exchange	20	3	19	0	36	0	14	192	16	1	0	301
COMMUNITY	SUBTOTALS	142	91	78	21	198	21	15	74	76	10	2	728
	Survey	36	3	41	21	72	8	1	26	40	6	2	256
	Facilitation	106	88	37	0	126	13	14	48	36	4	0	472
TRUSTEES	SUBTOTALS	6	0	7	0	25	9	29	0	10	0	0	86
	Facilitation	6	0	7	0	25	9	29	0	10	0	0	86

Methodology

Our process for analyzing the qualitative data started by reading the comments and identifying key words that led to the development of **themes**. The themes then became the categories we used to group and code comments from all participants in order to help us make sense and meaning out of the data set. Theme coding captured both positive and negative comments that were either supportive or critical of the theme topic, which has been elaborated on in the summaries. The key words and themes were updated multiple times throughout the coding process, which took place over the summer and fall months. Three people reviewed the data set to check for errors and mitigate bias, with one person leading the coding and two assisting. It should be noted that themes can and often do overlap, and are not to be treated as siloed categories. Therefore, some key words appear in more than one theme and many comments were assigned two themes. The names of the themes were reviewed and revised based on input from the staff and trustee working groups.

All comments were treated equally from facilitated sessions and the survey, and are presented at an aggregate level, but can be disaggregated by participant groups if desirable. We were careful not to overlook individual or isolated comments even if they only appeared once, and included them as additional insights. A small number of comments with inflammatory language from the survey were omitted from the analysis. Blank, "NA" and incomplete responses were not coded, as well as a small number of comments we could not make sense of. It should be noted that parents and caregivers are proportionally overrepresented as a group in the data set, which is common in a process such as this. Intentional effort was made to include and centre student voice throughout the consultation process.

The majority of the consultations were conducted in May, June and July. In September and early October, consultations were conducted with specific groups and students to give a more complete picture of different DDSB experiences, a deeper understanding of what students are thinking about, their values, and what directions the district should pursue to best prepare them for what is ahead. Additionally, we included methodological recommendations from Board resources where appropriate, such as the DDSB Listening Tour Report Feb 2023, Workforce Census and Listening Tour and Additional Analysis May 2022. We also pulled recommendations from the Indigenous Staff and Families Engagement Summary Report Fall 2022, directly referenced in the Indigenous Rights and Ways of Knowing theme summarized on page 18-19.

Theme: Advancing Equity

Figure 3: Word Cloud of Key Words for Advancing Equity

Many comments in this category acknowledged the good work the DDSB is doing on Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, but signalled the need for an ongoing process to advance equity through an anti-oppression approach. Many comments expressed a desire for a firm, action-based commitment that continuously improves equity, diversity, and inclusion in the academic program and the learning organization, aligning with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Many comments from parents in particular wanted to see more culturally relevant pedagogy and a more diverse curriculum, including texts and materials that honour the diversity of the DDSB community. Some parents wanted to expand Afrocentric programming, such as the Black Excellence Made Evident (BeMe) program, to other schools. Some students wanted more of a curricular and co-curricular focus on topics such as gender & sexuality, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, and women's rights. Other students noted that there has been good support from their peers and staff who have taken an interest and active role in supporting Black student success encompassing academic, extracurricular, and well-being domains.

Many comments highlighted the importance of equity-focused events and programming, such as Critical Consciousness Practitioner Inquiry (CCPI), The Living Compendium of Action for Black Student Success, Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Conference, Black Excellence Made Evident (BeMe), Cypher Black Male Empowerment Conference, and many others. These events play a key role in honouring, affirming, and communicating values and

accomplishments related to advancing equity. Some comments suggested an expansion of similar programming to address anti-Indigenous racism and the unique needs of other groups and communities, such as addressing anti-Asian racism, and including events like Iftar dinners at schools. Some comments from students, parents, and staff focused on their positive feelings of belonging through the representation of multiple religious holidays and perspectives in and out of the classroom, and were interested in the further inclusion of different secular and faith-based holidays. Some comments requested additional support for prayer space and halal food options, while others expressed a concern for certain practices such as fasting or religious absences impacting academic and classroom activities. Some comments noted the importance of coming together as a community to have uncomfortable conversations, including having dialogue opportunities, healing circles, listening sessions, as well as community safety town halls and forums with students in leadership roles.

Many comments recognized the diversity of DDSB staff that reflects the communities in which they live and learn, including the hiring and promotion of diverse leadership teams. Some comments specified a need to continue anti-racism training, cultural awareness, and unconscious bias. Some commenters recommended that administrators should be better trained in how to address particular incidents of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, while others provided advice on how to get help outside of the DDSB system. Many comments from students and parents also expressed the need for staff to consistently address bullying, racism, sexism, and homophobia in school communities. Some comments from students expressed ongoing issues with homophobia and the need for more outreach and education, especially regarding gender and the trans community in high schools. Some comments from students spoke to repeated and unresolved incidents of harassment and stalking towards girls from other students.

Some parents in particular expressed concern over their perception that the DDSB is ideologically driven to promote equity at the expense of student learning and the overall student experience. Their comments included requests for more communication and transparency on gender, sexuality, and 2SLGBTQI studies, as well as having the school require consent in allowing their child to participate in these discussions. Some parents requested age-appropriate curriculum, while others asked for more recognition of other world religions and home values in the classroom. The majority of Inflammatory comments were found in this category, and were removed.

Many comments from students, parents, staff, and community members focused on the need to ensure better accessibility and inclusion, which are perceived as ongoing unresolved barriers. Many comments focused on the need to enhance support for students with disabilities, exceptionalities, Individual Education Plans (IEP), and other learning and access needs. Many comments focused on the importance of staff support towards them, while others focused on updates to building and school infrastructure such as the function of elevators and doors, and not making accessibility an afterthought in campus facilities.

Many comments from students focused on listening more to student voices and better inclusion of student agency at all levels of education (K-12). Some comments from students focused on taking on leadership roles within their community to become a voice for their peers, particularly from marginalized groups. Distinct child rights were also addressed, as some students noted a perceived lack of equality for students themselves, mirrored in some parent comments stating that students' human rights were also at risk.

Illustrative Quotes for Advancing Equity

"The DDSB is ahead of other Boards when it comes to equity. Equity is moving in the right direction by recognizing needs, creating an inclusive learning environment."
- *Community*

"I feel supported by the Superintendent and System Lead. I appreciate the work that is being done with Human Rights, Anti-Black Racism and the Indigenous Education Policy and the support we are given to do the work."
- *Staff*

"Something that's working well is knowing you have commitments such as CCPI and The Living Compendium, GSA Conference, etc. within the Board and that you are putting significant resources towards Anti-Oppression work. I am very grateful for this and that you are also ensuring that all schools are doing this work."
- *Parent*

"I use events like the Living Compendium to embrace Blackness and feel connected to my community, despite not always having other Black students and staff in my everyday experiences."
- *Student*

"Equity can't just be words in a plan, not just empty policy – needs to be grounded in action."
- *Staff*

"What's important to me is supporting our students' identities in every way. Intersectionality as living beings with many strengths. How can the DDSB embed that with everything we do?"
- *Community*

"I would like to see concrete solutions that name an action plan to combat anti-Black racism in our system. It needs to be named and addressed in this plan. The last census made it clear that we are not doing enough and it deserves a place in this plan."
- *Staff*

"School would be better if we were equal."

- *Student*

"The most important thing for me is being a voice for POC [people of colour] students who may not be provided with the same opportunities as other students do."
  - *Student*

"Sadly, you have to advocate, advocate, advocate. The daily stresses of having a child with exceptionalities shouldn't, in my opinion, be compounded by having to use up your reserve tank to campaign for basic rights that are available to other students."
 - *Parent*

"Listen to the students better, as it's all about 'equality' 'till it comes to us."
  - *Student*

"I would like to see more communication and transparency on gender studies. Also, include that 'we understand these values may not align with all world religions, but we create a space of love and respect for everyone regardless of our differences.'"
  - *Parent*

Image 7: Responses from Parent Involvement Committee & Durham Partners Symposium
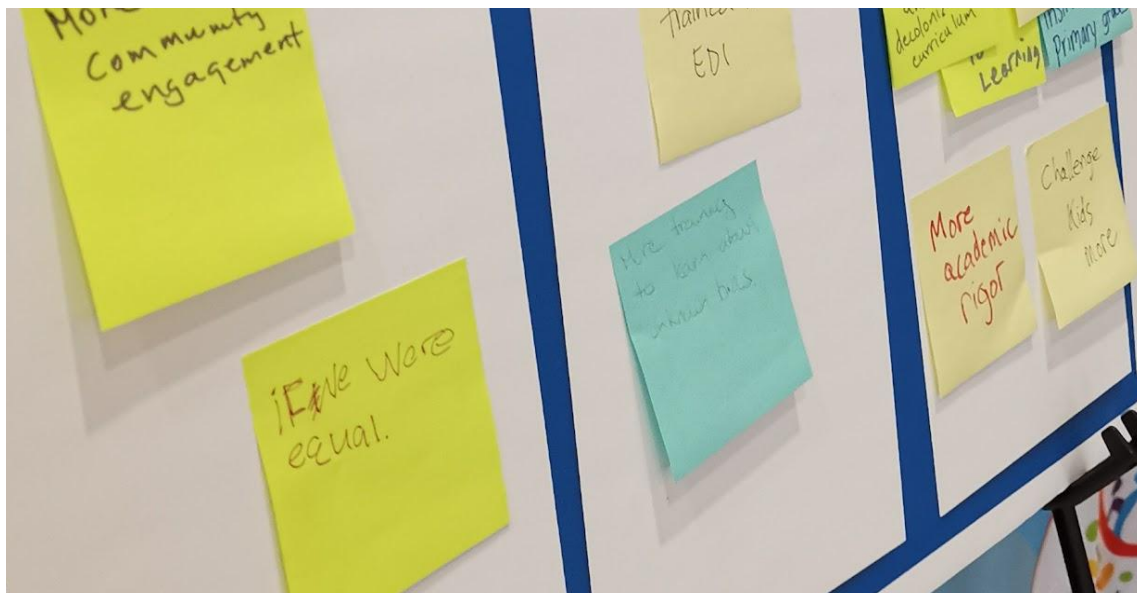
Theme: Dissatisfaction & Disengagement

Figure 3: Word Cloud of Key Words for Dissatisfaction & Disengagement

burnout

boredom   staff leaving
the profession   school choice

dissatisfaction &
lack of purpose
disengagement

apathy

lack of progress   lack of action

giving up & checking out   frustration

Comments in this category spoke to a general frustration and disengagement from school matters. Comments included responses that nothing was working well, being bored at school, or totally burned out from work and looking to leave the profession.

Some comments from students advised their peers not to enrol in the DDSB, and these were usually grounded in experiences of being bullied or not feeling heard by staff. Similarly, some comments from staff expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and disengagement from a lack of trust, not being valued or respected, and burned out from overwork and lack of purpose. Some staff comments noted that aside from their positive relationships with students and other staff, not much else was working, while others noted that the prevalence of behaviour and relationship issues in their school community was detrimental to their well-being. Some specifically noted an absence of support or poor communication from administrators as a contributor to stress. Some comments, specifically from staff who had been teaching for decades, marked a change in the last few years that shifted their ability to do the work effectively and meaningfully, while seeing little progress in the right direction. This and other similar comments from staff indicated that system-wide concerns related to teaching and lack of support may be causing a push to leave the profession.

Comments in this category from parents and caregivers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of progress year-over-year in student learning, or a perceived lack of educational quality in the DDSB. Some comments spoke of seeking alternatives through tutoring and school choice, including leaving the Board for homeschooling, private or Catholic education.

Illustrative Quotes for Dissatisfaction & Disengagement

"I can't remember the last time I thought that things were working well at work."
- *Staff*

"Explore the possibility of attending a different board or make sure you understand educational procedures and human rights so that you can fully advocate for your child."
- *Parent*

"Every year is more upsetting than the previous. No learning, just wasting time and resources."
- *Parent*

"Not much is working well for me right now. I feel unsupported, isolated and without resources to serve the needs of my school and class. I do NOT feel valued."
- *Staff*

Theme: Indigenous Rights & Ways of Knowing

Figure 4: Word Cloud of Key Words for Indigenous Rights & Ways of Knowing

Truth & Reconciliation

equity of outcomes

diverse staff

equitable resourcing

structural barriers & biases

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

recognizing Indigenous knowledges

Indigenous rights & ways of knowing

ways of knowing, being, doing

we are all treaty keepers

distinct Indigenous rights

culturally responsive & relevant pedagogy

recognizing colonial impacts

94 calls to action

duty-bearer responsibilities

concerns over ideology

Many comments in this category spoke to the need to recognize distinct and inherent Indigenous Rights. These rights should be regarded as separate from Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights, with a focus on centring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in the DDSB. Many comments in this category acknowledged the importance of implementing the new Indigenous Education Policy and Procedure, while expressing the need for honouring treaties between Indigenous nations, recognizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and addressing the DDSB's response to the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission related to education. Comments appreciated the updates to the Operational Plan 2021-2022 that centre Indigenous and human rights, while at the same expressing a desire to ensure that the Indigenous Education Policy and Indigenous Rights inform the MYSP, with demonstrable commitments beyond tokenism.

While many staff comments in this category recognized that the existing Indigenous Education Policy and Procedure was well written and useful in building capacity, some comments also signalled further action was needed. Some staff communicated gaps in the implementation of the policy, noting the need for specific direction on Indigenous education during staff meetings, additional training around cultural sensitivity, and appropriate education methods, as well as professional development geared specifically to Indigenous educators. Some comments from staff noted benefits to working with a team that centres Indigenous rights, encouraging opportunities for connecting with other Indigenous staff regularly and sharing their identity.

Across this category, there was an interest in embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing across departments and disciplines, not just within specific Indigenous courses or programs. And while some parents in this category expressed concern over what

they see as the promotion of Indigenous education at the expense of student learning and the overall student experience, many parents, staff, and community members wanted further incorporation of Indigenous education, narratives, training, and visibility into the school community. Some students, as well, wanted more of a curricular and co-curricular focus on topics such as Indigenous rights. Some suggestions for achieving this included, by celebrating the art, knowledge, history and resilience of Indigenous communities, with a renewed focus on Indigenous language revitalization.

Some comments from community members spoke to the need for an enhanced Indigenous Education Department to support Indigenous learners by maintaining and elevating what Indigenous students need to graduate as they face educational and structural barriers within colonial education systems. There was a desire for Indigenous students to see themselves reflected in the classroom, and for addressing incidents of anti-Indigenous racism and microaggressions. Community members in particular shared concerns around funding and resourcing of the Indigenous Education Department, noting unequal experiences between schools across the Board, along with the funding challenges of bringing Indigenous voices into the classroom. Some comments spoke to the need to engage Indigenous leadership to help facilitate and implement the work of incorporating Indigenous rights and ways of knowing, including a superintendent who identifies as Indigenous and is focused on Indigeneity.

Some comments in this category spoke to the challenges experienced by Indigenous students and families, which include consultation fatigue, distrust, using colonial approaches to consultation, the intersectionality of Indigenous identities, timing, and lack of capacity or resources. Comments recommended engaging Indigenous groups earlier in the process to build trust and co-create methods. Other comments spoke to the Board's responsibility to include Indigenous voices in an era of Truth and Reconciliation, particularly Indigenous student voices. Other comments suggested that a review of the content and recommendations from the Indigenous Staff and Families Engagement Summary Report (ISFES 2022) would be an additional way to include more Indigenous perspectives to inform the development of the MYSP.

Based on the above suggestion, a review of the ISFES report was conducted with the goal of pulling relevant MYSP recommendations. In the report, self-identified Indigenous staff, students, and families expressed a desire for an overall organizational community culture that reflects and respects their diverse cultures, languages and truths. There was specific reference to the DDSB honouring the Board's Indigenous Education Policy through a regular operational review "to ensure that programs, procedures and practices reflect an Indigenous focus."

The ISFES report affirms much of what was heard in the survey and facilitated sessions in this category, with additional insights such as:

- Recommendations for ongoing connection opportunities for youth and family voice, including Indigenous family cultural events, and working with the Indigenous Education Department for direct engagement;
- Specific recommendations on integrating Indigenous content and pedagogical practices into classrooms, including knowledge of Indigenous contributions, treaties, residential schools, and true histories of Indigenous peoples;
- A desire to work with elders and traditional knowledge keepers to teach skills, cultural traditions and community values to students and staff, including advising the Board on policy and procedures.

Illustrative Quotes for Indigenous Rights & Ways of Knowing

"What works well is that there is an Indigenous Education Policy and Procedure in place that has been well written and is thoroughly comprehensive."
- *Staff*

"Ensuring the Indigenous Education Policy, and Indigenous Rights continue to be at the centre of the strategic plan. There needs to be a demonstrable commitment to this, and not for tokenistic purposes."
- *Community*

"What could be improved is recognizing inherent Indigenous rights, honour treaties and the 94 calls to action of the truth and reconciliation report specifically education."
- *Parent*

"This Board is doing a lot to get Indigenous language and culture out there, with outdoor education, other programming. But not every school can do it, and it's not part of the official curriculum. Woven in but not on paper."
- *Community*

"Communication with teachers and principal and the support of the Indigenous Education department is working well."
- *Parent*

"As an Indigenous education coach, I like feeling welcomed into schools. I like when teachers WANT to make changes to their practice."
- *Staff*

"Education regarding social issues (Indigenous rights in Canada, education of gender & sexuality, anti-black racism, women's rights, etc.) is working well."
- *Student*
"I would like to be able to comfortably share my Indigenous History without parameters."
- *Staff*

Theme: Learning & Living in Community

Figure 5: Word Cloud of Key Words for Learning & Living in Community

Many comments in this category focused on the importance of the DDSB connecting students, staff, parents and caregivers, and the community in intentional and meaningful ways. Improving communication in all forms was central to this category, as the word "communicate" and its variants appeared over 750 times. There was a clear thread from parents who expressed the need for a stronger connection and better communication between home and school on topics such as their child's learning progress, as well as more transparent decision-making and policy at the Board level. Many parents suggested more consistent communication through improved report cards and more parent-teacher interviews, as well as occasional fun community events that include the entire school community. Some wanted to see schools become community hubs and act as anchor institutions in local neighbourhoods.

Many parents expressed a desire for a single, consolidated resource to find all information and to communicate with the Board, school and teachers. While some parents saw the benefits of the many communication channels and tools (School Calendar, Remind App Parent Portal, School Messenger, etc.), others noted that some processes seem dated, redundant, inaccessible, or nonfunctional. Some suggested that consistency in the tools used, or an investment in a single central digital tool, would be helpful. Some community members noted that dissemination of messaging is happening, but not equitably across the system, while others noted mixed messaging from the Board compared to staff. A community member suggested that the DDSB website be set up with nested questions and answers targeted to parents or other groups, making it easier for them to find information.

Parents expressed that the onus was too often on them to reach out and advocate for their children by communicating with staff, noting long waits for support systems to come to them. Some community members had concerns about access for newcomers, parents, or staff getting to decision makers, while others noted that ongoing support for parents, caregivers, and families is important, suggesting more notice for introducing events or programs to provide adequate support to families. Some comments from community members in particular expressed that parents may be interested in learning from credible professionals how to best ask questions about schooling, reduce anxiety, and manage their own mental health issues. Others noted that students, parents, and staff should reach out to their local settlement agency for support. Yet another community member suggested having an open house at the beginning of the year to gather resources and support for students and families.

Many comments discussed the need for consistency within and between schools, as well as increased funding for events, facilities, and infrastructure. Many students and parents provided feedback on preferred times for school start and end time, as well as the length of classes, citing a balance for extracurricular activities, employment, and the sleep needs of adolescents. Some parents noted the impacts on quality of life and the learning experience of distance to school, access to after-school programs, and school placement. Some comments also focused on the benefits and challenges of the modified calendar system, with some requesting further promotion and others suggesting its cancellation. Some comments provided feedback on access to French Immersion, noting that it is a desirable program and should receive more resources and support.

Community members in particular noted the importance of the Board establishing agreements and ongoing communication with organizations to facilitate co-ops, internships, after-school programs, Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) programs, and in-classroom placements for students, as well as more opportunities and spaces for community partners to engage with staff and students. Community members also wanted more partnerships and collaboration with municipalities and other agencies for joint problem-solving and sharing goals.

Many comments from students and parents expressed a need to improve access to and maintenance of facilities and other state-of-good repair concerns, including working air conditioning and heaters, affordable food and events, clean bathrooms, inclusive bathrooms, portables, better wifi for chromebooks, and public elevators for multiple floor schools. Some students requested improvements in the school environment for comfort and focus such as taller desks, wheely chairs, and more freedom to wear hats and chew gum in the classroom, while others wanted more consistent support for menstruation, including the restocking of sanitary napkin dispensers and the need for a comfortable place to rest during cramps or sensory overload. Some comments from students and parents noted the benefits of dress codes and school uniforms, while others saw them as too restricting. The concepts of

collaboration, building relationships, and finding support in community were evident in this category.

Illustrative Quotes for Learning & Living in Community

"It is critical for staff to make connections with students and families in order to be successful both academically and non-academically."
- *Staff*

"More school communication and more school/community engagement would be my biggest requests. I also feel it is important for the board to plan proactively for the growing population in Oshawa. The new schools that are being built are overpopulating so quickly and the shortage of space and resources is really being felt by students."
- *Parent*

"By the time events trickle down to me as a front line community partner I have less than a week's notice. There is often no space / meeting room to present the idea of the event/program face to face (and an email inbox is a bad place to land a brand new concept)"
- *Community*

"I wish there was a communication app or program that is the hub for EVERYONE and EVERYTHING."
- *Parent*

"Sometimes it's a challenge to keep track of everything and remember passwords. E.g. Parent portal vs Remind app vs School messenger vs DSTS account vs Email vs Twitter vs Instagram vs Text messaging vs voicemail etc."
- *Parent*

"Something that would improve my school experience is less expensive ways to participate in school events. I really can't afford this."
- *Student*

Image 8-9: DDSB Living Compendium & Student Art Gallery

Theme: Meaningful Learning

Figure 6: Word Cloud of Key Words for Meaningful Learning

Many comments in this category focused on the need to continuously pursue a responsive and high quality teaching and learning program for all staff and students. Many comments from staff in particular wanted to see more room for creativity and flexibility in instructional practices and curricular content in order to best reach their students. Many comments centred students and student success, including different definitions of success, as what they valued most in their work. There was a strong sense that building both academic and life skills for students should regain a more prominent position as a priority for the DDSB in the face of many competing priorities. Student comments emphasized that their learning and schooling should be meaningful to their lives as young people, better reflect the world they live in, and the values they hold. Even the youngest students expressed a desire for teachers who can help them learn new and important skills and knowledge that reflect their changing world.

While many comments in this category had a curricular focus, or expressed a desire to return to core subjects such as Math and Language Skills in tandem with a renewed focus on student achievement, others wanted to move beyond narrow or traditional definitions of learning and success in order to promote all kinds of learning both in and out of the classroom. Common examples include service learning, field trips, students co-designing inquiry topics or guest speaking events, integrating technology, athletics, programs like SHSM or STEM, small group learning, tutoring or coaching. The comments spoke to the importance of events like the Living Compendium as essential for sharing and celebrating

the remarkable work of students guided by teachers under the right conditions. There was also a desire to focus on evidence-based instructional practices such as phonics.

Some comments focused on staffing issues, staff to student ratios, and class sizes. Though these matters can fall outside the purview of Board decisions, many comments noted that having more staff available and smaller classes would make a significant positive difference in students' lives, which is the core objective of the work they do. Some parents noted that DDSB@Home and other hybrid options have continued to be beneficial for students, especially in providing additional focus for learning and a safe environment. Some students noted that online options should eliminate barriers such as those students being restricted from on-campus events like outdoor sport meets.

Student comments in particular focused on the importance of maintaining good grades while also expressing a strong desire for more engaging and creative ways to learn. Many students wanted better coordination of assessments among teachers and improved access to technology and resources. Many students wanted a more balanced workload, reduced homework they don't see value in, and more in-class support for improved learning.

Many parent comments in this category focused on the need for supportive teachers who spend time getting to know students, consistent and transparent assessment and evaluation practices, and the importance of preparing students for postsecondary and career opportunities. Some parent comments wanted to see a return to core subjects and less of a focus on equity and gender issues in the curriculum, which they perceive as overemphasized. Other comments focused on the importance of students learning how to learn rather than straight knowledge acquisition, developing transferable skills such as problem solving and communication, and more opportunities for experiential, active and play-based learning rather than relying on technology and rote learning.

Illustrative Quotes for Meaningful Learning

"Personally, the most important thing about my experience in school is that I'm in a respectful, equality based, represented, understanding, compassionate, kind, professional environment, to achieve and perform at my best."
- *Student*

"The most important thing to me is that there is space for me as an educator to be creative and think outside of the box."
- *Staff*

"We are failing them terribly by letting the students who may need a bit more help academically fall through the cracks. We just continue to push them through without the skills they need to succeed, not only in school but in life itself."
- *Staff*

"Some instructors refuse to meet obligations involving reading and discussing IEPs with extraordinary students leaving some students lacking the support meant for them as decided by the DDSB."
- *Student*

"Not saying I'm an irresponsible student, I just feel there is far too much workload and pressure placed on students to compete with their colleagues and meet expectations. Lessen the stress."
- *Student*

"The current system favours a business model that is not designed with student learning in mind but rather achievement. The two should not be conflated."
- *Staff*

"Something that would improve my child's school experience is standardized marking strategies for fair and consistent marking, not based on how the teacher feels in the moment or how they feel about the student."
- *Parent*

"The most important thing is real education. Primary focus of actual things important in life. Language, grammar, spelling, math, science. Kids need education on academics. Not personal beliefs."
- *Parent*

"The most important thing to me is academics accompanied by student voice, having a say in what you're learning and how you're learning it."
- *Student*

"What would make school better for me is expanding on more learning of the world and things that actually matter for us to individually, but unitedly learn how to be our best person our own way."
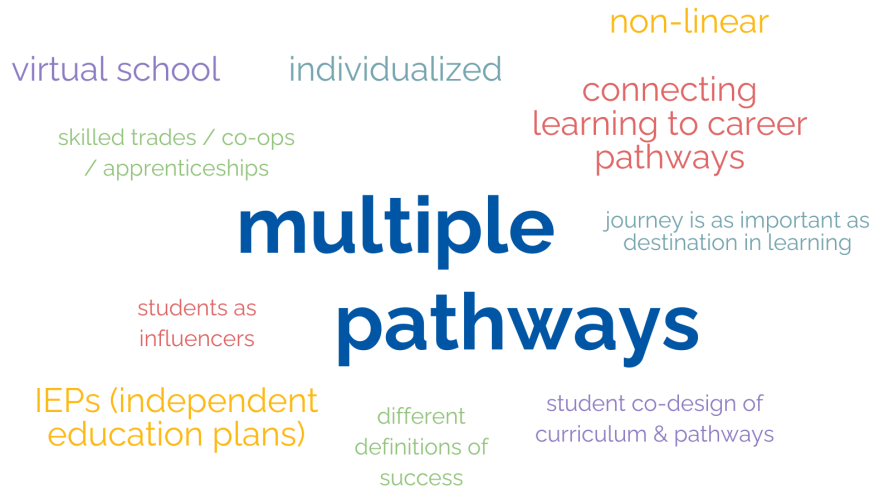- *Student*

"The most important thing is that I and my fellow students have many opportunities to engage in fun, visual and hands-on learning."
- *Student*

Theme: Multiple Pathways

Figure 7: Word Cloud of Key Words for Multiple Pathways

non-linear

virtual school   individualized

connecting
learning to career
pathways

skilled trades / co-ops
/ apprenticeships

**multiple
pathways**

journey is as important as
destination in learning

students as
influencers

IEPs (independent
education plans)

different
definitions of
success

student co-design of
curriculum & pathways

Comments in this category focused on the importance of recognizing and valuing the different pathways students may take on their journey. Success can be defined differently, as students enter school with different goals, knowledge levels, expectations, abilities, disabilities, needs and wants. Many student and parent comments in this category spoke to what they see as the limitations of secondary education because of a lack of real-world learning and experience, and limited options for flexibility. Students wanted better preparation for the future, such as school and life transitions, financial literacy, guest speakers, co-op placements, and field trips. Students and parents were appreciative of the flexibility and support they received from guidance counsellors, and the ability to take advantage of Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM), online schooling via DDSB@Home, or a modified calendar, as methods for opening up these pathways.

Some student comments noted barriers to their career interests due to how challenging certain courses are, with others suggested that the classroom should be a space to explore learning and different fields of study in an immersive and hands-on environment. Some students also spoke of the lack of time in their day to engage in more exploratory learning or life activities due to the amount of time spent on school work, noting impacts on their mental health and well-being. Others struggled with the expectations of school as a defined pathway towards a linear future of graduation and post-secondary studies. Many comments from parents in this category also indicated that students with disabilities or exceptionalities required additional support or adapted programs to meet specific learning needs and follow individualized pathways.

<u>Illustrative Quotes for Multiple Pathways</u>

"*Having a wider choice in courses and different paths to take would make school better.*"
- Student

"*I want to have the ability to gain experience in the possible careers I want. Being able to be ready for university.*"
- Student

"*As a student, I would like to have more people such as guidance counsellors at school to help my educational development and guide me in the right direction.*"
- Student

"*Being a part of ICT SHSM has been working well for me as a student in the DDSB.*"
- Student

"*I'd like a completely different system that will almost definitely not be achievable within the next 30 years. The whole grading system and course selection seems ridiculous. School would be better if teens didn't have to decide a path in life. School would be better if universities did not look at high school grades.*"
- Student

"*Cater to the children the reality of going to school and learning about the things to help them become great citizens and leaders.*"
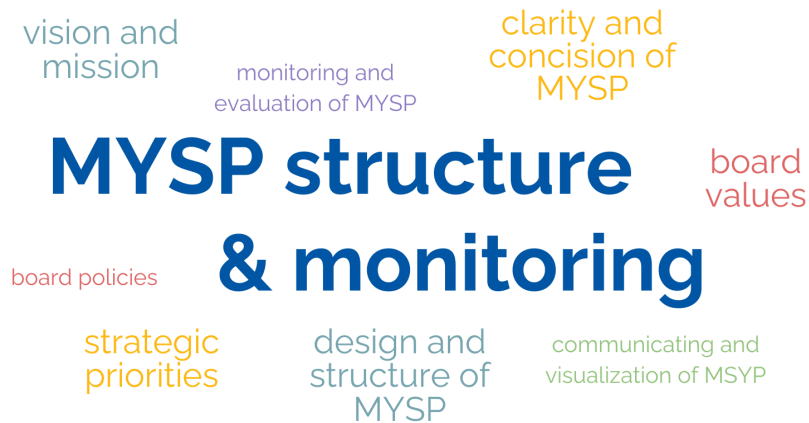- Parent

"*Keep virtual school (DDSB@Home) a permanent choice for all families, not based on numbers but always as an option so those who do not wish to attend in person for whatever reason can still learn but from the comfort of their own home.*"
- Parent

Theme: MYSP Structure & Monitoring

Figure 8: Word Cloud of Key Words for MYSP Structure & Monitoring

vision and mission

monitoring and evaluation of MYSP

clarity and concision of MYSP

MYSP structure & monitoring

board values

board policies

strategic priorities

design and structure of MYSP

communicating and visualization of MSYP

Comments in this category focused on ways to improve the structure, communication, implementation, and monitoring of the next MYSP. Most of the comments in this category came from staff, with a small number from parents and community members.

Many comments in this category spoke to the desire to have a concise, clear, resonant MYSP that includes relevant and representative images of students and staff. While some comments appreciated the distinctiveness of the current six strategic priorities as pillars of the plan, others wanted to see more interrelatedness across pillars and specific updates to language such as "Success" and "Innovation," which felt outdated. Some comments expressed that "Ignite Learning" was a recognizable and resonant wordmark that was distinct to DDSB. An Indigenous community member specifically asked to use the Ignite Learning symbol as a way to teach about the Three Fires Confederacy.

Staff comments in this category noted the challenge of aligning board-wide policies and initiatives with the daily work done with students in the classroom. Others felt they were able to understand the core priorities and how they fit into their work as educators, which made them more achievable. There was an advantage to having a short list of clear priorities; however, some staff felt that, on the operational side, competing priorities were diluting focus and core priorities. There was a sense that small, purposeful, intentional "'inches'" to action would be more successful as opposed to big, daunting, overwhelming plans and goals. Some staff noted that for the DDSB to have a meaningful mission and values, there is a need for stronger implementation of Board policies, seeing them in practice, and identifying when leaders are not aligning with them.

In terms of communication, staff comments appreciated that the current MYSP is easy to communicate to other staff, students, and families, and would like to see this clarity and precision continue. Comments expressed a desire for Board policies to be clearly communicated in common language, with a renewed focus placed on the importance of the DDSB being present and visible in the community.

In terms of implementation, comments expressed a desire to see greater alignment and clear direction around three DDSB policies (DDSB Indigenous Education Policy, 2021; DDSB Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Racism Policy, 2022; DDSB Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy, 2022) to give strategic-level policy more teeth through action-based and operational plans.

In terms of monitoring, comments spoke to the need to include qualitative measures rather than relying on quantitative data. Some staff requested open-ended goals to tailor more to the needs of individual schools, while others acknowledged that leaving certain responsibilities with the school community means harmful systemic practices may remain. Some staff noted that it takes a strong and healthy workplace culture to achieve departmental and organizational goals towards the MYSP.

Illustrative Quotes for MYSP Structure & Monitoring

"*I want staff who work in and for our schools to have demonstrated commitment to the MYSP and Policies.*"

- Staff

"*For the multi-year strategic plan: I would like to see concrete solutions that name an action plan to combat anti-Black racism in our system. It needs to be named and addressed in this plan. The last census made it clear that we are not doing enough and it deserves a place in this plan.*"

- Staff

"*Ensuring the Indigenous Education Policy, and Indigenous Rights continue to be at the centre of the strategic plan.*"

- Community

"*A nurturing, supportive learning environment accepting of all students through action, not just empty policy.*"

- Parent

"*Continue to build upon the incentives and policies that the DDSB is in the process of implementing, but also make sure that they are being carried out effectively.*"

- Parent

"*Be prepared to have numerous initiatives thrown at you that will claim to improve student learning and teachers' delivery, but in reality you need to figure out what works best for you in the classroom to get your students to actually attend and submit work.*"

- Staff

Theme: Staff Support & Development

Figure 9: Word Cloud of Key Words for Staff Support & Development

Many comments in this category focused on the paramount importance of staff feeling safe, supported, trusted, heard and valued. The word "safety" appeared over 50 times in staff comments, referring to both staff and students needing to feel safer in their working and learning environments. There was a strong sense of moral purpose in the comments, with many staff speaking to their commitment to make a positive difference in students' lives as what they value most about their work. Many staff underscored the importance of autonomy and flexibility in determining the best ways to support students' growth and development. Teachers and administrators expressed that feeling valued and supported as professionals is essential for student success.

While many comments spoke to feeling supported by colleagues, leadership, and resources, others expressed that they experienced a lack of support and resources, or too many competing demands and initiatives that diluted their primary commitment to centreing and supporting students. Many comments wanted to see more resources dedicated to supporting all learners, including students at risk and those with disabilities and exceptionalities. Some instructional staff expressed that consumable budgets were too low and too restricted by approved vendor lists. Others wanted to see more professional development opportunities for new curriculum roll outs, structured literacy, STEM, best practices, and equity, diversity, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism. Many comments expressed that there were good opportunities for collaboration and professional development, while

others noted that professional development would be better scheduled during school hours rather than after school or evenings. Some comments spoke to the need for better onboarding, networking and knowledge sharing for new and existing staff, and more consistent direction from leadership both at the school and system level, including firmer decision making.

Similarly, many comments from students focused on the importance of developing good relationships with educators, with many sharing praise for the care, commitment and expertise of their teachers. Students noted that some teachers encouraged engagement with leadership opportunities and other co-curriculars, while others were disappointed in uneven experiences depending on which teachers were assigned. Some students felt well supported by staff and recommended other students to connect if there were concerns, while others noted a lack of action from staff when students are reaching out for help. Some comments from students spoke to a perceived lack of trust and privacy from teachers.

Many comments from staff focused on the need to protect and promote staff mental health and well-being, noting that staff who are not well cannot lead schools or classrooms effectively. Some comments expressed an appreciation for staff and student wellness initiatives, and for the greater awareness of mental health in general, while others wanted to see more resources devoted to mental health and well-being. Some comments spoke to the workload becoming unmanageable, leading to feelings of burnout and low morale, stress, or feeling overwhelmed and not able to focus on what matters most.

Staff raised concerns about consistent expectations and consequences around student behaviour and discipline, noting that they sometimes feel unsupported by administrators and parents in their professional judgement, and at times there is no consistent follow through on discipline and academic integrity matters.

Many comments from parents focused on the desire to have more training for master teachers who are skilled at creating safe and engaging learning environments. Some comments from parents focused on a perceived shortage of qualified teachers and supply staff impacting the stability of learning in the classroom. Some comments from parents noted that students with diverse learning needs were not receiving the support they were promised in the classroom. The concepts of feeling heard, collegial support, and well-being were evident in this category.

Illustrative Quotes for Staff Support & Development

"Something that's working well is our kind, caring, supportive principal who respects my professional judgement and shows appreciation for the work that I do. He also is protective of our mental health and prioritizes our wellbeing, which in turn, makes us happier, healthier, and more productive."
- *Staff*

"I wish I felt safe, respected and supported in my workplace."
- *Staff*

"The most important thing to me is I want to feel I have made a difference in the lives of my students, and to help them realize their hopes and dreams for the future."
- *Staff*

"I want teachers to be involved in the teaching experience, to want to be a teacher."
- *Student*

"The most important thing to me is that I feel supported, given autonomy and have the resources to do my job well."
- *Staff*

"The support I'm getting from my admin has been phenomenal. Working together with team teachers certainly lightens the load."
- *Staff*

"Administrators have more diverse responsibilities than ever before. Administrators want to do well in all aspects of their work but when focus gets too divided it is difficult and stressful."
- *Staff*

"Stop parent-pleasing, and start student-pleasing!"
- *Staff*

"There is not enough training for the average teacher or even for many SERTS. There are not enough EA's. Not providing these necessary supports and expertise makes it difficult for all kids to function in a classroom, and it makes it difficult to be understanding of different needs when the needs are negatively impacting them."
- *Parent*

"My children have had so many disruptions to their learning this year because of staffing issues and this has been a major challenge as they have just come back to in person school this year after having been online for 3 years. A year that should have been offering stability for them became very stressful and chaotic because of staffing shortages."
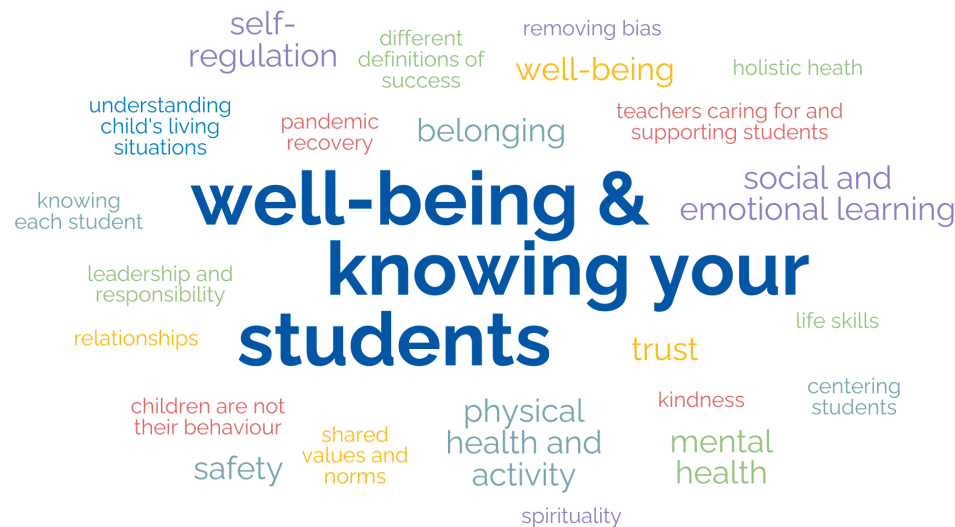- *Parent*

Image 10-11: Staff Consultation (Union & Federation Partners)
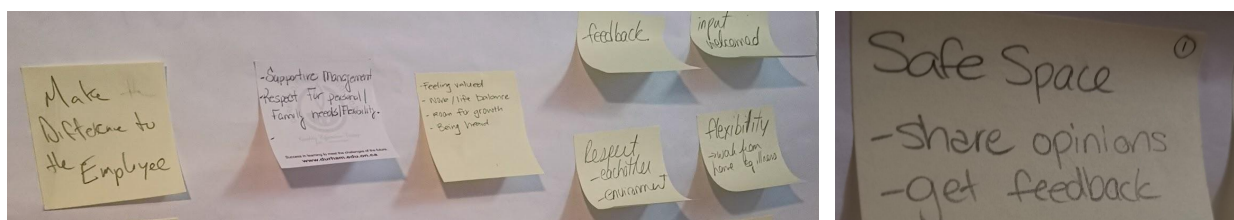
Theme: Well-Being & Knowing Your Students

Figure 10: Word Cloud of Key Words for Well-Being & Knowing Your Students

self-
regulation
different
definitions of
success
removing bias
well-being
holistic heath
understanding
child's living
situations
pandemic
recovery
belonging
teachers caring for and
supporting students
knowing
each student
well-being &
social and
emotional learning
leadership and
responsibility
knowing your
relationships
students
life skills
trust
children are not
their behaviour
physical
health and
activity
kindness
centering
students
shared
values and
norms
mental
health
safety
spirituality

Many comments in this category focused on the importance of knowing and understanding students for their full selves. Many comments from staff in particular expressed the need for safe, healthy, inclusive and welcoming school environments to honour the different gifts students bring as individuals. At the core of many of the comments in this category was the foundational importance of relationships in schooling: teachers knowing their students and students knowing their peers and teachers. There was a strong desire to see more effort and emphasis on building relationships in order to create the best social and academic environment for students to thrive. Additionally, some younger students wanted their teachers to provide more advice during times of transition, such as entering a new grade.

Many comments focused on the need to provide more support and services for students with disabilities and exceptionalities, students at risk, vulnerable students, and students with ill health. Many comments from parents in particular wanted to see teachers intentionally invest in getting to know their students, building social and life skills such as confidence and resilience, and creating safe and inclusive learning environments where students can express their ideas freely. The word "included" appeared over 80 times in comments from parents in this category. Students and parents wanted clear pathways to care, and for students to be known by as many adults in their school buildings as possible.

Some comments wanted to see more efforts to reduce bullying, discrimination, and bias from social and academic environments, while others wanted to see more of an emphasis on behavioural norms, holistic health, getting more sleep, and healthy movement — noting that physical health, well-being and learning are all strongly linked. Many comments from students in particular wanted to see personal growth opportunities, increased trust, as well

as staff and peer support for mental health and a sense of belonging. Some students felt unable to take care of their personal needs due to being overwhelmed with the school environment and expectations, while other students recommended putting effort into interpersonal relationships through friendship and socialization as well as learning about their own identity. The concepts of care, kindness and understanding were evident throughout the comments in this category.

<u>Illustrative Quotes for Well-Being & Knowing Your Students</u>

"Caring teachers who can understand the needs and changing behaviours of their students. Teachers should focus less on labelling students as problem kids and try to identify what may be the cause. Praise students rather than put them down. The world does enough of that."
- *Parent*

"Personally, I believe school would be a better place if students wouldn't feel the need to give and or feel peer pressure whether it's acting a certain way, hiding who they truly are, feeling the need to impress someone whether it's their friends, family, teachers etc."
- *Student*

"The most important thing is that my child feels safe and included."
- *Parent*

"Improving the mental health and inclusive student services supports for schools is ESSENTIAL."
- *Parent*

"Something that is working well is teachers talking to each other, clubs, recess, friends, teachers being chill understanding this generation and building bonds with each student and being easy to talk to,"
- *Student*

"I would like to see more emphasis on curiosity, self-determination and holistic well-being of our students and staff. More time outdoors for everyone, integrating principles of land-based learning and land-connection is a very inexpensive way to focus on curiosity and self-determination."
- *Staff*

"Do not be afraid to speak your mind. Always be respectful with your delivery, but know your voice is just as important as anyone else's. Just because you are a student, a young teen or teenager, does not mean your opinions and thoughts don't matter. Remember to respect those who are preparing you for the world and ask as many questions as you feel fit."
- *Student*

"Students need mental health support after the pandemic. Teachers need to understand them so they have someone to talk to."
- *Parent*

Image 12-13: Student Art Gallery Pop-Up Consultation

Image 14-15: DDSB Trustees Working Group Meeting

Next Steps

With the completion of the Phase 2 consultation period in October, we have begun to work with staff and trustees to draft directions for the new multi-year plan based on the synthesis of the consultation results summarized in this report and other board data. The staff and trustee working groups have shared their feedback on this report, along with recommendations for incorporating its findings in the new MYSP. In the second half of November, there will be a Community Information Session to share the results of the consultation and draft directions for the new MYSP with the DDSB community.

The new MYSP is scheduled to be presented to the Board in January 2024.

Table 3: Next Steps

Milestones	Timeline
Phase 3 Synthesis & Development	September - December 2023
Community Information Session	November 2023
MYSP Presentation to the Board	January 2024
Phase 4 Implementation, Communication & Monitoring	February 2024 and beyond

team@maximumcity.ca
www.maximumcity.ca

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