

# **SOAR 4 Community Research**



## **February 2020 Focus Groups with Parents, Residents, Staff and Students**

# 7 groups with 130 participants

- **Parents:** 3 groups with **40** current parents
- **Staff:** 2 groups with **37** teachers and other staff
- **Students:** 1 groups ... **39** Hudsonville HS almost all 12th-graders
- **Community:** 1 group with **14** business, civic and church representatives

# **Theme #1: Relationships and connections**

**Relationships and connections  
continue to fill the heart of  
the culture and shared  
values enveloping  
Hudsonville Public Schools**

***“I want to be here!”***

- **Caring, committed and dedicated teachers**  
*... “The teachers are really invested in our students.”*
- **Involved parents and community**  
*... “Parents are supportive and involved, they know what their kids are doing.”*
- **Hudsonville’s small-town feel**  
*... “The district is large but it doesn’t feel that way because the community is tight.”*

- **Links and other buddy programs**  
... *“Every kid is different, and you can grow yourself as much as they can.”*
- **Can count on administrators**  
... *“I’ve always been very well supported by administrators, both at the school and district levels.”*
- **Able to collaborate with colleagues**  
... *“We share a lot so we’re teaching the same thing at the same level with the same depth.”*

# **Theme #2: High quality education**



***“A strong focus on  
academics.”***

- **Prepared for college**  
... *“College was easy for our daughters.”*
- **Competitive**  
... *“As you have conversations with parents from other districts, you get a good feeling about what our kids are working on here.”*
- **More attention requested for students who do not plan to go to college**  
... *“What about the kids who aren’t going to college?”*

**Theme #3:**  
**Help for students**  
**struggling**  
**academically**

- **Just ask a teacher ... *“Teachers are available, you just have to ask.”***
- **Intervention ... *“Teachers do an amazing job of identifying when a child needs additional coaching.”***
- **Parents admit they do not understand how math is taught today ... *“You need a teacher to come in and explain it in person to parents.”***

# **Theme #4: Expand world language instruction**

- **Elementary school special**  
... *“The earlier it starts, the easier it is to learn.”*
- **Cultural literacy**  
... *“Another language would teach an appreciation for another culture, we need to embrace other cultures.”*
- **No consensus on any single language**  
... *“I wouldn’t care what language, any second language would expand their minds.”*

# **Theme #5:**

## **More carts with laptops needed**

- **Teachers ask for more devices**  
*... “You have to sign up for the laptops at least three weeks in advance or you won’t get one.”*
- **Parents are uncertain about the need for 1:1**  
*... “Technology is great but we lose the human element, do kids know how to talk and communicate?”*



- **Parents and teachers prefer the devices stay at school**

*... “I don't want the stress of worrying about my 4th-grader bringing it home.”*

*... “It's easier to monitor the laptops if they're on carts than if they're allowed to bring them home.”*

# **Theme #6:**

# **Restrict cell phones**

# **in school**

- **Cell phones ubiquitous at the secondary level**  
... Staff and parents report almost all HS students and many MS students and even some upper elementary students have a cell phone at school.
- **Valued by some teachers in a few classrooms as an instructional tool**  
... *“We use them quite a bit in my labs, some things are much easier to do on a phone than on a laptop.”*

- **A policy on cell phone use would be welcome, especially to restrict their use in the classroom**

*... “It’s a huge distraction for teachers and other students.”*

*... “Perhaps there could be a compromise where there’s no cell phone in the classroom where we’re learning but it’s ok at lunch or in passing time.”*

# **Theme #7:**

## **More support for extreme behaviors**

- **More children with extreme social, emotional or behavioral issues, especially younger elementary level**

*... “We’re seeing a lot more big behaviors, although I know it’s not just Hudsonville.”*

*... “When I switched from middle to elementary school, I was shocked at the number of extreme behavior on a daily basis at the elementary.”*

- **Teachers and parents appreciate HPS hiring additional mental health professionals, but more resources are still needed**

*... “Teachers are going above and beyond to help struggling students, but the biggest problem is beyond the teachers.”*

*... “I know you’re working on it but it feels like such an emergency at times.”*

- **Parents welcome information from HPS about community mental health resources**

*... “There’s a lot of parents who don’t know where to go or who is good.”*

*... “There’s a gap between providing the mental health resources in the schools and becoming a triage place for mental health resources.”*



# **Theme #8:**

# **Facilities**

- **Cannot wait for the new school space**  
*... “It’s just way too big, you can’t get to know everyone, we’re just waiting for the new 5-6 school.”*
- **Smart design**  
*... “You get a favorable first impression when you walk in, including from the office people.”*

- **Overall satisfied with building maintenance**

*... “The district does a good job, our maintenance guy at our school is phenomenal.”*

*... “You can’t find a shred of paper on the floor.”*

# **Theme #9: Communications**

- **Universal platform from teachers to parents**

*... “Can they find an app that’s applicable for all, I have four or five apps from different teachers?”*

*... “I don’t have time to check six different websites.”*

- **Appreciate PowerSchool**  
*... “Once your kid is in middle school, you can know every assignment your kid has and every grade they earn.”*
- **Email Appleseed to residents without kids currently in school**  
*... “I don’t have kids in school, is there any way we can get to know what is going on in the school district, we want to be more engaged.”*

**Thank you!**

**Any questions?**