Employee Focus Groups Feedback

	Strengths	Opportunities
Themes from this Group	• Trauma Sensitive Schools • Extended Day/ Summer • Programs to combat poverty: health, dental, mental health, wrap-around, meals, Bookmobile in community, PreK • Professional development • Quality Staff	• Communication: consistent, implement programs, respond, listen to feedback, be transparent • Unrealistic timeframes, etc. with implementation of new programs, initiatives • Hire more staff (less admins and behind the scenes) and more teachers, Tas, Paras • Clear up schedules • More technology • Feel valued and have pride in our work; celebrate success

Hopes & Dreams	Do Well	Do Better	Vision
"I work in Schenectady" is a plus $$ Structured hallways - SHS is overcrowded Achieving at grade level Acts of kindness; global citizenship After school – clubs, activities, trips to engage students in school All staff TCIS trained Alleviate burdensome tasks, such as assessment at district level Alternative classrooms in the district Avoid learned helplessness in students and families Behavior specialist for every building Better graduation rate Better policies Bilingual staff/ translators at all schools	"Intent" to develop programming and curriculum Added supports (PPS) Ahead of others in TSS, equity, culturally responsive -- becoming automatic and what we live and breath Availability of social-emotional supports Backpack program Backpack Program Being trauma informed and	Access to necessary technology Add highly trained teachers Alleviate burdens of classroom teachers - paperwork, district assessments Attendance Be prepared for when grants end Be sure equity does not ignore high performers Better access pts for families Career readiness, academic programming Change too quickly to determine efficacy of implementation - example: communication about focus groups, not clear where certain employee types would go Class sets of technology - esp w/ online state testing Communication - things feel top heavy and we get inconsistent messages	Equity not just for students but for teachers: buildings, demands, requirements We love to teach: Teaching and Learning Our focus is teaching and learning, but our heads are spinning Dedication - this is us! We need more follow up and ongoing PD or check-ins

Building sub for teacher to fo to PD and observe each other	increased staff education	Communication from 108 to school to teachers; chain of command is ineffective	We are a large district, many changes in admin with little input from teachers -- initiatives, programs, resources
Community gardens in every school	Bookmobile	Consistency across district (ex. PAX v. PBIS, reading and math programs)	
Continue to develop a broad range of opportunities for students	Bookmobile, bring reading into community	Consistency with curriculum assessments (overaoad0, data requirements (not just a "paper façade")	Like: equity, excellence in teaching
Develop a love of learning	Boys Day Out, Girls Day Out	Constant, unrealistic time frames for new assessments and programs, initiated by district level coordinators	Missing: cultural focus
Different levels of graduation			
Diversity of IFL materials (culture, household)	Classrooms show growth in academics and social- emotional skills	Cultural competence	Dislike: efficiency
Door alarms/ cameras in all buildings		Disconnect - we have systems and protocols but we don't follow them or they don't work	Add a mission statement to talk about your plan for your vision
Dual teaching		Don't communicate to homes well - only for some who know school and how it works	
Eliminate split classrooms			
Equity between buildings in district	Communication and layout/ infrastructure of policies and programs	Exit Interviews	Missing community, family, students
Every class a co-taught class		Feedback given but not listened to (i.e. summer program). We would want a response and follow through.	Equity is unclear, not all schools have the same things - tech, fields, AC, gyms
Every student leaves K-2 ready for the next grade	Dental services for students		
Feel supported		From admin to building admin improve the chain of communication: interpretation, consistency, clarity, language and knowledge to pass forward	Like dedicated
Feel that they are readers, writers	Despite afternoon and evening lives parent siblings, kids come to school		Efficiency doesn't seem to fit
Feels like there is not enough space		Funding	Resonates:
Figure out ways to help kids create paths to get to success - alternative possibilities		School spirit	Excellence in teaching, equity - meeting the needs of every student, continually improving
For our community: collaboration, cooperation, safety, stability within families, see teachers as resources and trust	Develop a big bag of tricks since you see so many things	Gaps in policies (academic expectations for sports)	
For students: everything, love learning, opportunities, confidence, whole child not test scores, safety, choices, children do not have "levels"	Diversion program	Hallways - increase hall staff/ paras, for language/ behavior	
	Diversity	Hard to find the decision-maker	
For us: appreciation from coworkers, families, and admin), gratitude, consistent protocols, professional consideration (AC, time management)	Educational opportunities and programs (extended day)	Hire more teachers and less "behind the scenes" positions (admins, 108)	
Full blown technical school on site - allow younger grades access	ENL supports	Hiring trained TAs with fair compensation	

Gen Ed students access to alternative programming (mental/ behavior)	Faculty/ staff collegiality	Identification of special education students in need, not reducing identification based on numbers solely	Missing: why efficient? All about teacher and learning - need parent, families, community
Get fully funded, with reparations included	Families help each other, students want to take care of each other	If you rock the status quo, you are at-risk	Consistency with growth
Gratitude, truth, social-emotional skills		Inconsistent access to resources (tech, staff)	
Green community - solar city, recycle at school, urban farming	Finding good, solid, powerful teachers	Need more staff: ELL, Reading, Math, social workers, paras	Is excellence or success right word?
Hall monitors/ buddy system in elem	Fine Arts: space, classes, interests, shows	Inconsistent expectations between/ within cohorts	Teach to whole child, reach before teach
I fell in the loop with administrative actions		Interactions with students and staff	
If our community does not have resources, can we educate and have more to offer?	Focus on TSS initiative	Lack/ limited work-based learning	Resonates: Excellence of teaching and learning; effective v efficient
Increase understanding of culturally diverse practices	Free afterschool and summer programming	Let's Talk as a method to force communication - shouldn't be needed; people should be responsive.	
Initiatives are aligned, purposeful, consistently applied	Free breakfast and lunch	Leverage our partnerships better	Missing: continued growth rather than improvement, engagement by all stakeholders; too general
iPads/ technology for every student		Make changes in response to our requests	
Make job feel more do-able for teachers, counselors, social workers	Free breakfast/ lunch	Many course options by limited sections	
Meaningful professional development - conferences	Health care access in HD	Meetings at times that parents can join. Pick 2 days in Nov when families can come at all times for conferences. Offer child care	
Meaningful trips	Hometown health	Middle school schedule so rigid -kids miss out to get other things, larger classes	Define equity
More assistance to teachers (paras, etc.)	ID of some of our weaknesses and willing to accept there's room for growth and try new things	More consistency - don't move so quickly to the next fix	Define efficiency
More consistency in school structure to aid transient students		More healthcare access for all schools	Innovative, global citizens, community, collaboration
More copiers in large school setting		More manpower. Specific people to engage with families more effectively	
More effective			Teach compassion, ownership, to support our community
More field trips		More para support in classrooms instead of more administrative roles	
More intervention support beyond teacher to psychological issues	Increased # of books for students in classroom	Need more electives for kids	
More parent education/ involvement		Need more Pre-K - all day, more classes, smaller classes	
More reading specialists		Need to increase participation of parents/ family	Continually improving can imply
More resources at younger grades; seems there is a great emphasis in 3-8	Increased graduation rate, test		
More resources: humans, curriculum - academic and SEL, full time/ PT paras for K			

classrooms, more reading teachers, therapeutic resources, technology
More social workers
More teachers to have authentic lessons that are unconventional (take risks) (overload of paperwork, short term obligations with no follow through
More vocational/ trade classes
New school -- old, needs AC
New teachers have emotional supports to answer questions
Not asked to do SO much, have time to do it well
Not just book smart
NYS rethink regents diploma requirements
Parent and community engagement
Partnership/ interconnectedness between school and community
Printers that work and more of them
Programming alternatives to study hall
Reduced class sizes - more $ and space and quality staff required, board values but doesn't seem priority
Retirement
Same experience -- all grown ups, students feel this is a place for me like neighboring communities
School is the glue to the community; we know our families and people come to events
Self-confident
Smaller class size
Smaller class size
Smaller class sizes (not class size reduction teachers)

scores, student attendance
Incredible business partners - Proctors, City Mission
Kids become attached to school - loyal, hard to move
Literacy/ Math Institute
Look at whole child, family, community - what's right for the kid
Many options - programming, classes, extracurricular
More Pre-K full day
Moving toward student-centered approach
Nurse full-time in every building
NYC Columbia Parent Outreach/ Communication
Passionate educators
PD opportunities
Pedagogical knowledge and practices is much better, more

Ongoing walkthroughs create an anxious and judged teaching environment; trust us as professionals
Onsite child care for employees
Our implicit bias causes us to overlook diversity of backgrounds
Parents don't know how to access info and become resentful
People make decisions who don't know the work
Polish summer school program
Providing support for classroom teachers
Pulling students from one thing to another - what's the priority?
Push out into the community - engage with people where they are
Recruit SD teachers
Reduce class sizes
Retain current staff
Retain quality teachers
Safety in student behaviors
Schedule blocks in elem don't match requirements for instruction - where do these times originate? Never includes passing time.
Scheduling with shared staff
Smaller class size in element schools -- high needs district with higher class size than suburban counterparts
Some schools feel very different -- old school, benign ignoring (wait til it passes)
Some schools have programs that others don't. We don't seem to know what works and look at what works. Don't ask us.

the district is defensive - we have to improve - should be inherent
Will be should be is
Emphasize E words the same as teaching and learning
Continually improving is not a high enough bar; doesn't seem to show pride
What do we mean by excellence?
Equity is important but not fidelity in practice -- what does it mean?
Too much stuff

Smaller classes	creative than neighboring places	Some staff resistant to change (l.e. TSS< tech, PAX, new initiatives)	
Space	PreK	Some things presented with a little deception - not full information	
Staff support each other - loving accountability	Pre-school funding	Staff turnover - esp. paras	
Stakeholder involvement/ volunteers/ program	Providing food for families: breakfast. lunch, backpack, summer	Stretch resources too thin - we increase the number of kids served but decrease quality	
STEM	Respite rooms	Student scheduling confusion - students don't want a certain class but nothing else is available	
Stop band-aids	Restorative circles		
Streamline process to get student needs mt - ex. Medical when at building	Revamping curriculum	Sub shortage	
Students and community see ourselves as something valued	Staff commitment ot students - many students have that "one person"	Sustainability of ideas	
Students are valued members of the community who can be independent		Systems procedures in some schools feel very democratic, district feels more top heavy	
Students feel school is a place for me		Technology - computers, access to laptop carts in classrooms, printers/ copy machine, network	
Students learn life skills (job applications, finance, transportation, resume, health/ wellness, cooking) - 4 week course to ready you to be independent	Subsidized meals	Technology: more, new, that works, teacher support and training	
	Summer Enrichment		
	Summer program opportunity for students	Thins occur "behind the curtain" so I just do what I'm told	
Students will love school and feel safe		Timeliness of responses to internal customers	
Sustainability of programs and initiatives	Summer school	Timing of implementation	
Teachers being valued and treated with personal and professional respect	Trauma Sensitive Vision	Timing of morning meal now later -- not bringing it in with students and taking away from class	
Technology in al classrooms	TSS and RP work		
Therapeutic supports and wrap around services for students, families and teachers	TSS is gaining traction	Told "do it now" rather than given time to implement with fidelity	
Training prior to implementation of initiatives and ongoing support	Turn around rooms have decreased incidents/ referrals	Too many initiatives	
		Transient population - may help to keep in same school	
True representation of RTI			
TSS continue with a vengeance			
Uniforms/ limited dress code	Urban Schools Conference	Transportation - delays and safety concerns, K in front	
Unlimited transportation, school vans			
Use our own expertise prior to external -- to share and retain	Urban Schools Conference	Try to impact quick change (i.e. fluency, a mismatch between level and expectation)	

Want to feel proud of our work: public education generally low morale, our results are depressing/ defeating. We feel we are accomplishing but don't celebrate. We maximize co-teaching with purpose, planning When I eventually move from my position, I can feel I made a positive change My dreams for our students are technology based. One of the things that I would love to see would be to issue laptops to all students in grades 3-12. I would also like to see updated technology in the classrooms. Smart screens, document cameras, etc. Some classrooms have them, some don't. That's all :)	Value mental health Emphasis on special education Variation of programs an opportunities (AVID, ROTC, VOTEC, sports, IB) Very flexible We are damn good	Use our families' strengths to support our students Use systems we use with students to include each other in a democratic, level playing field We point figures to others, "not mine" - IT, in buildings Over the last few years, and especially last year, our district has seen an elevated influx of students who do not speak English-at all. They sit in our classrooms listening to instruction and conversations occurring around them and are unable to benefit at all for a number of years until they understand English-and then they have difficulty demonstrating what they may know as the expressive part of communication often lags behind the comprehension part. We need to be offering a program that provides support for these learners, perhaps centrally located, so that instruction can be provided in, for example, Spanish as well as English and that can provide a place for ELL students to feel part of a social group going through the same experiences together. Just a thought.... For years my concern has been that our district gives no priority to students' physical health and wellness. Students in our district have a great need to engage in fitness and wellness activities and opportunities. Over the years I have brought this concern up to administration and gotten great lip service as to the concepts value. But have seen no evidence that support any interest in helping this concern be	

		addressed. Our physical education classes are a dumping ground in the middle school and HS. Our facilities are sub par to schools in the capital district. Gym spaces have been repurposed for other uses, which further limits programing and doubles class sizes in space which cannot facilitate safe activity. The lack of equipment for fitness in our schools is an embarrassment compared to what other districts offer. When I take my basketball team to other middle schools, they repeatedly comment "why don't we have anything like this". I believe that addressing physical wellness and all that it means should be a priority. Academic success comes from a strong base of physical wellness and stable mental health. We are doing a great disservice to our students by not addressing this matter. My other concern is our allowance of the cell phone during school. I have attached 2 articles which interest me. I have plenty more to say, so if you have any interest in this topic..... invite me to a conversation!	