

Lapeer Community Schools

Focus panels conducted to obtain community
input related to
the Lapeer Community School District's
Strategic Plan

A report of findings

January 2012



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Background

During January 2012, Banach, Banach & Cassidy (BB&C) facilitated nine focus panels on behalf of the Lapeer Community School District. Almost 100 people participated in the focus panel process.

The focus panels were conducted to obtain community input related to...

1. assessing community thinking in regard to declining enrollment and revenue;
2. discovering what people think about creating a virtual learning center and specialized or “focus” schools; and,
3. ascertaining what people want from their schools in the future.

All panels started with an orienting PowerPoint presentation by Superintendent Matt Wandrie. Then, they followed an agenda (set of basic questions) which was used to guide the discussion. All focus panels ended with participants grading the Lapeer Community Schools on ten characteristics common to effective organizations.

The 90-minute focus panels were conducted in school facilities across the School District. Seven of the nine focus panels were composed of parents of the children who will be most directly affected by declining enrollment and revenue, and who would be most directly impacted by any changes implemented to address these challenges. The two remaining focus panels were composed of teachers and members of the Lapeer Community School District support staff.

The *Executive Summary* contains general observations about the comments made during focus panel discussions. It is followed by the focus panel agenda and respondent commentary.

Executive Summary

The Lapeer Community Schools focus panels were commissioned by the Lapeer Board of Education to obtain community input related to the School District's strategic plan and related initiatives. Information gathered from focus panel participants will be used as a decision-making tool as the Board of Education updates the School District's future educational plans.

Each focus panel began with a PowerPoint presentation by Superintendent Matt Wandrie. This PowerPoint presentation served as an orientation to the focus panel agenda by giving panelists a common frame of reference. For example, Superintendent Wandrie reviewed Lapeer County's declining birth rate and unemployment levels, and indicated how those factors affected student enrollment and operating revenue in the Lapeer Community School District. The PowerPoint presentation also described innovations such as a virtual learning center and "focus" schools.

Superintendent Wandrie emphasized that the District did not have an agenda; rather it had a vision for the future that needed community consideration and input. Wandrie told focus panel participants that the District needed their best thinking in planning for the future of the School District and the Lapeer community.

The focus panel discussions began by asking participants to grade the quality of education provided by the School District, "all things considered." Most panel participants gave the Lapeer Community School District a grade in the B/B- range. A few participants assigned a grade of A or C, and one panelist gave the District a grade of C-/D+. No panelists gave the Lapeer Community School District a failing (F) grade.

Most panelists said that they were not surprised by the student enrollment information presented by Superintendent Wandrie. However, a few panelists were surprised by the

magnitude of the decline. (The School District has lost almost one-third of its student population since 1980. The current enrollment of 6,000 is expected to decline by another 1,000 students during the next few years before bottoming out at about 5,000 students.)

Panelists said that most people in the community understand that school revenue is tied to student enrollment. At the same time, panelists said that they did not understand why all Michigan school districts do not receive the same “foundation allowance” (or State aid).

Superintendent Wandrie also presented graphs that depicted Lapeer’s excess building capacity. He indicated that only one Lapeer school is operating at full capacity, and that the District currently has space available for another 700 students. Given the declining birth rates in Lapeer County and resultant declines in student enrollment, Wandrie said the Lapeer Community School District’s excess capacity is likely to continue increasing for at least the next five years.

Members of the focus panels were asked what consequences or options the District and community would have to face given declining enrollment, declining revenue, and excess capacity. It was obvious to most panelists that some schools would have to be consolidated and/or closed. It was also obvious that the District would have to develop and market new programs to maintain its current student base and to attract new families to the District.

Most panelists said that it would make sense to close one of the District’s two high schools. “The enrollment data makes it obvious that one of the high schools will have to close,” said one panelist. “But the process of closing a high school isn’t going to be pretty.”

Other panelists voiced support for closing one of the high schools by noting that the high schools are already having a difficult time fielding athletic teams, and by indicating that students in the District’s two middle schools would not have difficulty coming together in one high school because there is not a “competitive mentality” at the middle school level.

Panelists suggested a variety of other options the District needed to consider in regard to declining enrollment, declining revenue, and excess capacity. These options included

closing one or more elementary schools, making one of the current middle schools a school for sixth graders, putting the sixth graders back in the elementary schools, and moving all ninth graders to the middle schools, thus creating one high school to serve grades 10-12.

There was near unanimous support for opening a virtual learning center in the Lapeer Community School District. While panelists had questions related to the logistics of operating a virtual learning center, they immediately saw benefits for Lapeer students and adults in the community. The panelists also saw the marketing value of a virtual learning center. They stressed that an individual or group not affiliated with the School District should not receive virtual learning services free.

In regard to the virtual learning centers, panelists expressed excitement about increasing the comprehensiveness of the curriculum and expanding the number of electives. Panelist said such a program would also benefit struggling students and those with special needs. A few panelists asked how the center would be staffed and whether it would reduce or increase the number of teachers.

The interest in focus (or specialty) schools was quite high, and generated a number of questions related to their purpose and implementation.

Opening a school with a year-round calendar was clearly the most popular of the three focus school options panelists were asked to consider. About ninety percent of panelists liked the idea of a year-round school while about one-half were supportive of the arts infusion focus school. *The Leader in Me* focus school received minimal support with many panelists asking why leadership couldn't be taught in all Lapeer schools.

All panelists had questions related to the focus school concept and the logistics of operationalized focus schools. Panelists asked questions such as:

- What happens to the current curriculum?
- How will the staff of a focus school be selected?
- Where will the focus school be located (and why there)?

- If a school is designated as a focus school, what happens to the students currently attending that school? Will they get first choice to stay if their school is designated as a focus school?
- How will a focus school affect transportation?
- Will the focus schools only be considered at the elementary level?
- When will the focus concept expand to the middle school and high school?
- Why can't there be other focuses, like science or math or technology?
- Do we really need a whole school focused on art or leadership? Can't focus schools be half-time programs?

Indeed, the questions asked by panelists can serve as a guide for developing additional information about the focus school concept and preparing for informational meetings with members of the community.

When asked what concerned them most as they thought about the future of the Lapeer Community School District, panelists tended to mention those subjects covered in the orienting PowerPoint presentation—declining enrollment, declining birth rates, declining revenue, and excess capacity.

When focus panel members were asked whether the District should face its challenges head on or delay taking action as long as possible, every panelist responding to the question said that the District should take action now to face its challenges. “It’s our only option,” said one panelist. “You won’t get anywhere doing nothing.”

If panel members were in charge of the Lapeer Community School District, their first priority would be to address declining enrollment and excess capacity. One panelist summarized his group’s feelings when he said: “We have to face the facts. We’re going to have to consolidate the high schools and close an elementary or two.” A lady from another panel added this thought: “We tend to talk about our problems and not do anything. Good for Matt [Wandrie]. He seems to be determined to help us address our problems.”

During a final question asking what message they would like to send to the School Board or superintendent, panelists stressed the need to think outside the Lapeer box and get moving on ideas that would enhance the current educational program and provide the District with marketing opportunities that have potential for increasing its revenue stream. The consensus opinion was that something needs to be done now to address the challenges facing the School District.

The panels ended with participants using an A, B, C, D, F-scale to grade the Lapeer Community School District on ten characteristics common to effective organizations. The District received an overall grade of 2.8 on the 4-point scale (where A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0).

Below are the ten characteristics and the mean score (or “grade point average”) for each characteristic:

| <u>Mean Score</u> | <u>Characteristic</u> |
|-------------------|--|
| 2.9 | Global, long-range view -- the school district has a broad perspective, future-focused orientation; its thinking is strategic and systemic |
| 2.9 | Environmentally sensitive -- the school district is alert to marketplace conditions and anticipates societal changes |
| 2.6 | Customer-oriented -- the school district accommodates customer needs and wants; it is sensitive to the people it serves |
| 3.8 | Vision-inspired -- the school district knows where it is headed and is continually in pursuit of a higher agenda |
| 2.9 | Clear sense of mission -- the school district understands its purpose; its reason for being is clear |
| 2.6 | Entrepreneurial flexibility -- thinking, creativity, and innovation are nurtured at all operating levels; the school district seeks competitive advantage by investing in the development of its people |
| 2.4 | Process driven -- the school district has a process through which it capitalizes on change |

- 2.7 **Action bias** -- the school district is results oriented
- 2.6 **Communication effectiveness** -- the school district listens to its constituents and targets its messages; it systematically measures and influences perceptions
- 2.9 **Quality and performance focused** -- the values of the school district demand the best; it strives to exceed existing standards

Ratings were received from 92 of the individuals who participated in the nine focus panels.

The Lapeer Community Schools Focus Panel Agenda

Below are the questions posed to focus panel participants.

What's your general reaction to the PowerPoint presentation [presented by Superintendent Matt Wandrie as a matter of orientation as the first item on the focus panel agenda] ... did anything surprise you...was anything unclear or confusing... or was there anything about which you'd like more information?

Now let's go to something we all know—the ABC grading scale. I'd like you to grade the quality of education that is provided by the Lapeer Community Schools. All things considered, what grade would you give the quality of education being provided by the Lapeer Community Schools ... an A, B, C, D, or F?

What do you like most about the Lapeer Community Schools?

Did any of the enrollment information surprise you? What surprised you and in what way did it surprise you?

Do you think most people in the community understand that school revenue is tied directly to student enrollment?

What do you think about the current and projected excess capacity of our schools?

Given declining revenue, declining enrollment, and excess student capacity, what do you think are some of the consequences or options the school district and community will have to face?

Do you think the Lapeer Community Schools should consider opening a virtual learning center?

Thinking about the focus schools—that is, the year-round school, the art infusion school, and the leader in me school—are any of these schools of interest to you?

What concerns you most as you think about the future of the Lapeer Community Schools?

We've talked about a lot of potential changes today, and most of them will not be easy. To be a viable school district in the future and capitalize on the opportunities that change presents, everyone—school staff, parents, members of the community—will have to make some adjustments. There are two basic ways the need for these changes can be addressed by the Lapeer Community Schools: 1. The District can delay taking action as long as possible. This will mean that debt will continue to grow and programs and services will be scaled back accordingly. Or, 2. The District can face the need for change head on and begin taking action now. In short, the District can prolong the pain or face the pain and get past it. Which of these options makes the most sense to you?

Given our discussion on enrollment, revenue, focus schools, and tomorrow's educational program, what would be your first priority if you were in charge of planning for the future of the Lapeer Community Schools?

I'd like to end our focus panel by asking this: If you could send a message to the School Board or Superintendent, or if you could give them an idea to think about, what would be your message or idea?

Respondent Commentary

Mentions made by focus panel participants are summarized below. Mentions are grouped under each agenda question by the name of the focus panel.

What's your general reaction to the PowerPoint presentation [presented by Superintendent Matt Wandrie as a matter of orientation as the first item on the focus panel agenda] ... did anything surprise you...was anything unclear or confusing... or was there anything about which you'd like more information?

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Lynch | <p>The information was scary but exciting.</p> <p>I don't believe that declining enrollment is common knowledge throughout the community.</p> |
| Maple Grove | <p>I am concerned about what will happen to class sizes.</p> <p>Transportation will be a problem for focus schools; we already have kids who ride the bus for an hour each day.</p> <p>It's obvious to me that we need to think about closing West High School, putting a classroom addition on East, and moving all the high school students there.</p> <p>We need to do anything we can to improve Lapeer's reputation. Marketing is everything.</p> |
| Mayfield | <p>I was surprised to learn how many students we have lost.</p> <p>The information was definitely an eye-opener.</p> <p>It was shocking to see how our student enrollment has declined.</p> |
| Murphy | <p>The information was concise and clear.</p> <p>What is the vision for operating one high school?</p> |
| Schickler | <p>We need more information about <i>The Leader in Me</i> focus school; we're not sure what that is all about.</p> |
| Seaton | <p>Will we be closing a middle school in three or four years?</p> |

Consolidating is better than closing.

Turrill

It was refreshing to hear the truth about the difficulties the District is facing.

It was eye opening to see the actual numbers and history behind the declining enrollment.

The community will not like the changes that have to be made but once they see the facts, they will understand why some building closures are necessary.

Elementary Staff

Five years ago the District conducted focus panels and ignored the input.

Secondary Staff

Nothing was surprising. [Unanimous]

I like the idea of a virtual learning center; however, I am concerned that students won't receive the socialization they need.

How do we know if the student is completing the work if they take a virtual learning class?

Now let's go to something we all know—the ABC grading scale. I'd like you to grade the quality of education that is provided by the Lapeer Community Schools. All things considered, what grade would you give the quality of education being provided by the Lapeer Community Schools ... an A, B, C, D, or F?

Lynch

A-: B: B: B: B: B: B: B: C

Maple Grove

B : B : C : B : B : B-/C+ : B-/C+ : B

Mayfield

B : B : B : B-/C+ : B-/C+ : B-/C+ : C : C : C : C : C : C

Murphy

B: B: B-/C+: C: C: C: C: C: C: C-/D+: C-/D+: C-/D+

Schickler

B : B : B : B : B : B : C : C : C

Seaton

B : B : B : B : B- : C : C

Turrill

A-: A-: B+: B: B: B: B: B: B-: C: C

Elementary Staff B : B : B : B : B : B : B- : B- : C : C

Secondary Staff B: B: B: B-: C: C: C: C

What do you like most about the Lapeer Community Schools?

Lynch District meetings allow for parent input.

The District web site has a lot of information.

The RAZ program at Lynch which is funded by the PTC

Lynch parents seem to be very involved.

The building newsletters need to be available in print.
Having the information only on the web site limits the
number of parents who will take the time to read it.

Maple Grove District size is an attraction.

Strong community involvement

The District has a lot of volunteers.

A good, caring staff

Advanced placement classes (which should be marketed
more extensively)

Mayfield Size of elementary schools

Tight-knit community

The family feeling/atmosphere of the community

Murphy Teachers/the entire staff

The District has a warm, community feeling.

Seaton Middle schools are instilling a common, non-competitive
value system; the schools do not have an us vs. them
mentality.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Schickler | The District cares about children. |
| Turrill | The focus on values The lack of violence The lack of bullying Parents who don't send their kids to Turrill think because it is a "city" school bad things happen there. The truth is it is a very good school where parents care about their children. Diversity of student body LINKS program |
| Elementary Staff | The educational program is good. Staff is child-centered |
| Secondary Staff | I like the small town feeling. Teachers really care about students. The Alternative Education Program is strong in our District. I like the teaming concept in use at Lapeer West. I liked the way the middle school special education program was run during the 2010/11 school year. |

Did any of the enrollment information surprise you? What surprised you and in what way did it surprise you?

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Lynch | No surprises [Unanimous] |
| Maple Grove | No surprises [Unanimous] Everyone—at least all parents—seem to be aware that the District is continuing to lose students. |
| Mayfield | No surprises [Unanimous] I was surprised by the number of home schoolers in Lapeer County. |

Private schools are taking students away from the School District.

Murphy Most participants were not surprised by the information.

Schickler I didn't know the magnitude of the decline.

People know the community is losing population, but I'm not sure they understand that the schools are losing students.

People without school-age children don't know this.

When people come to school they see us steaming along, so they don't think about declining enrollment.

Seaton No surprises [Unanimous]

I am surprised by the number of home schoolers in Lapeer County.

Turrill No surprises [Unanimous]

Elementary Staff No surprises [Unanimous]

Secondary Staff No surprises [Unanimous]

Do you think most people in the community understand that school revenue is tied directly to student enrollment?

Lynch No [Unanimous]

Maple Grove No [Unanimous]

Some people might have some idea of the relationship between declining enrollment and revenue loss, but most don't have a clue.

Mayfield It seems like older residents feel like they have supported the schools long enough and don't want to pay more taxes.

Residents need to understand that schools play a huge role when it comes to buying a house.

Some residents understand how schools are funded; others don't have a clue.

Murphy Some do/some don't

Schickler Yes [Unanimous]

How is it that some school districts get more State aid than others?

Seaton Yes [Unanimous]

Turrill The community has a limited knowledge of the school funding system. Sharing this information will help them become more informed.

Elementary Staff Yes [Unanimous]

Secondary Staff No [Unanimous]

What do you think about the current and projected excess capacity of our schools?

Lynch Declining enrollment has impacted the classroom by increased class size. Some classrooms at the high school have a student teacher ratio of 40:1.

Maple Grove I think people are getting used to consolidation.

Closing West and moving students to East doesn't seem to be that big of an issue given the enrollment numbers and projections.

Class size is a problem now; will there be any way to decrease it with consolidation?

Will this excess capacity decrease when the economy improves?

Mayfield I was surprised to learn that many of our schools are running at one-half capacity.

After looking at the numbers, it is obvious schools will have to be closed.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Murphy | It is obvious that some buildings will have to close. |
| Schickler | It looks as if some schools should be closed. |
| Seaton | It is obvious that there will have to be school closings and/or consolidations. In the end, money will drive the closing or consolidation of schools. |
| Turrill | Class sizes are too large now. I am afraid that closing schools will increase class sizes further. |
| Elementary Staff | At Schickler there is an entire hallway with no classes. |
| Secondary Staff | There are too many empty classrooms throughout the District. |

Given declining revenue, declining enrollment, and excess student capacity, what do you think are some of the consequences or options the school district and community will have to face?

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Lynch | Some schools will have to close. Combining the high schools might be a good thing because it will eliminate the current rivalry. Newer residents will understand and support the closing of one of the high schools. |
| Maple Grove | Staff members will have to give up their “top of the line” health care benefits. We need to think about reducing class size as a way to attract students to Lapeer. If we can’t hire more teachers, can we at least bring back the classroom paraprofessionals? Can we do something to increase MEAP scores as a way of attracting new families? Maybe we should move all sixth graders to one of the middle schools. |

Mayfield Perhaps after seeing the numbers, people will be more likely to support closing of schools.

Having just one high school isn't necessarily a bad thing.

When it is decided which building(s) are closing, make sure to communicate the plan to parents.

It would be interesting to see how students feel about closing a high school.

Murphy Some schools will have to close. Due to the current size of the District, too many buildings are in operation.

Schickler I'm surprised that one-half of the people surveyed by the District okayed closing one of the high schools.

I think we should move the 9th grade to the middle school and close one of the high schools.

Students at the middle schools make friends with everyone; there is no us vs. them thinking. Middle school students would have no identity problem going to one high school.

The District can't field sports teams now; consolidating high schools would make it possible to draw from enough students to create sports teams.

Seaton Schools will have to close, but the devil will be in the details.

It would be good for Lapeer to have one "rural" school like Seaton.

Seaton could be an agribusiness focus school.

The School District is headed toward having one high school.

Seaton is uniquely suited to being a "outdoor education" focus school.

Turrill Schools will have to be closed. It isn't cost effective to keep that many empty classrooms open.

Elementary Staff

Kids are talking about school closings and consolidation. Someone needs to talk with them.

Everyone has to take a hit... sacrifice a bit.

It's obvious that one high school has to close.

People drive by the new middle schools and ask themselves, "If we're hurting financially, why do we have such nice middle schools?"

There are loyalties to East and West that will have to be overcome.

I think we should put the 6th grade back in elementary school.

The high school should never have been separated into two buildings.

Secondary Staff

It is clear that the District will have to consolidate to one high school.

Perhaps the District should consider one 10-12 building and one 7-9 building.

Do you think the Lapeer Community Schools should consider opening a virtual learning center?

Lynch

Yes. It should be offered at all grade levels.

What will it cost the District to implement the program for home schoolers?

Maple Grove

Yes [Unanimous]

This is a no brainer. We can better serve our students and those who are being home schooled.

A virtual learning center will open educational options for everyone in the community—both students and adults.

Doesn't the State require all students to have a virtual learning experience?

| | |
|------------------|---|
| | <p>Everyone is online. Learning online just makes so much sense.</p> <p>A virtual learning center will allow us to expand our offerings.</p> |
| Mayfield | <p>Yes {Consensus opinion}</p> <p>A virtual learning center would bring more opportunities to Lapeer students.</p> <p>A virtual learning center could provide more support for struggling students.</p> |
| Murphy | <p>Yes [Consensus opinion]</p> |
| Schickler | <p>Great idea!</p> <p>This would be great for gifted and talented students.</p> <p>We need to do this for all students (in addition to marketing it to people who are home schooling their children).</p> <p>I like everything about this idea.</p> |
| Seaton | <p>Yes [Consensus opinion]</p> <p>This is an especially good idea if it allows us to enroll home schoolers.</p> <p>This opens up a new market for the School District.</p> <p>A virtual learning center would be a great option for students with special needs or long-term care needs.</p> <p>A virtual learning center would benefit pregnant teens.</p> |
| Turrill | <p>A virtual learning center might help reduce the drop-out rate.</p> <p>It would be a great marketing tool for the District.</p> |
| Elementary Staff | <p>The virtual learning center is a great idea.</p> <p>How will it be staffed? Will we lose contact between teachers and students?</p> |

How will children interact and socialize?

Genesee ISD's virtual learning center has been operating for years. It's a huge success.

What effect will a virtual learning center have on special needs students?

Will this be open to just elementary students?

Secondary Staff

Yes [Consensus opinion]

Developing a virtual learning center will bring more opportunities to all students.

Thinking about the focus schools—that is, the year-round school, the art infusion school, and the leader in me school—are any of these schools of interest to you?

Lynch

The year-round school was favored by most participants.

The art infusion and *The Leader in Me* focus schools need more explanation.

The District should consider math and science focus schools.

Maple Grove

Yes, they all have appeal.

The year-round focus school makes sense and we ought to offer it as soon as we can.

If we had an art focus school, would all of the good art teachers go there?

Is it possible to offer a half-day focus program, like vocational education at the County vocational school?

Should we assume that focus schools would be centrally located so kids aren't bussed all the way across the District?

Will the District provide busing for focus school students?

Will Lapeer students have first choice before focus schools are opened to outsiders?

How will focus school students be selected?

Why can't all schools be focus schools?

Are there other focus school options, like a focus school that offers an independent learning option?

If an existing school becomes a focus school, what will happen to the students currently enrolled in that school?

Can we look outside the U.S. for focus school ideas? That would help with marketing.

We need a technology focus school because technology drives everything.

What about offering a science focus school?

Are there plans to create a focus school at the middle and high school levels?

Does a year-round calendar reduce bullying?

We should have a school focused on different learning styles.

All schools in the County should hop on to the focus concept and we should determine who has the best curriculum in each discipline.

With the year-round calendar, will the District offer tuition-based enrichment programs during the five-week summer break?

How will the focus schools be staffed... from existing staff... by seniority or skill?

Mayfield

The year-round school is a great option for some families.

Would the year-round school be offered K-12?

If a year-round school is developed, consider using outside

resources (in addition to teachers) to provide extracurricular learning opportunities for students.

In summary, we are most interested in the year-round school, are lukewarm about the art infusion school and *The Leader in Me* focus school.

Can't the beliefs taught in *The Leader in Me* focus school be incorporated into the current curriculum?

If a focus school is developed at a specific school, will those students who already attend that building have a "home field advantage" when it comes to student selection?

Murphy

The year-round school was favored by most participants, followed by *The Leader in Me* focus school and the art infusion school.

Many participants suggested that the District consider a math and science focus school.

Schickler

The year-round calendar was favored by all panelists except a self-proclaimed "traditionalist."

The art infusion focus school was favored by five panelists.

How will this affect busing?

Will parents whose children currently attend a school that is named a focus school have the first chance to sign up?

The year-round school would increase learning opportunities because the first part of the year is now spent on preparation for the MEAP test.

There shouldn't be an entire school dedicated to the arts or to leadership. Why can't there be an art and leadership focus school?

I don't think the District will get enough students to sign up for the art infusion or *The Leader in Me* focus schools, but if they do I'll be supportive.

Will the enrichment programs offered during the inter-sessions be staffed by my child's teacher?

Seaton

The year-round school is a great idea, but it should be offered K-12.

We need to see the “big picture” plan for the School District. It is important that we avoid the constant turmoil of change. For example, if a student goes year-round in elementary, what is the plan for staying on the same year-round schedule in middle school?

We need to make sure we avoid constant turmoil for our children. We don’t want them to always be the ones having to deal with change.

In summary, we are most interested in the year-round school, are lukewarm about the art infusion school, and cool to the idea of *The Leader in Me* focus school.

Leadership should be taught in every school; it shouldn’t be a focus in one school.

Focus schools should be in the four quadrants of the District... at the boundaries of the system.

I’d like to see a focus school in the health sciences... or in engineering... or in technology.

Turrill

A year-round school option will give parents more options.

The year-round school will help students retain what they learn.

Focus schools are a good idea but I am concerned about the impact on CI (Cognitively Impaired) students.

If year-round schools aren’t offered K-12, I am concerned about the impact they will have on families who have children at multiple buildings.

Support from participants was tied for the year-round school and the art infusion school, but luke warm for *The Leader in Me* focus school.

Elementary Staff

I like the art infusion idea.

What will be the extra cost of transportation?

What will it cost to remodel the facilities that are named focus schools?

The year-round calendar's inter-session enrichment options will decrease the need for day care, and we operate a day care program.

Secondary Staff

I am surprised that parents are interested in year-round schools.

If the District offers a year-round option for students, keep the calendar simple.

Make sure that focus schools meet the needs of special education students.

Focus schools could help non-college bound students by providing more industrial studies.

The year-round calendar was favored by most participants followed by the art infusion focus school and then *The Leader in Me* focus school.

The Leader in Me focus school concept could be combined into any focus school program.

What concerns you most as you think about the future of the Lapeer Community Schools?

Lynch

Losing more students

If we lose more students class sizes will continue to increase.

Maple Grove

Helping people understand the need for change

Mayfield

Not all people will be receptive to closing schools, even when they see the numbers.

The community needs to understand that changes need to be made in order for our schools to grow.

Murphy

If changes are not made now the District may not be able to recover.

If people don't have more choices, they may opt to attend other school districts.

Schickler

How effectively the District can deal with declining enrollment and revenue

Seaton

What to do with the "dreaded" city schools

Seaton parents won't send their kids to be with city school students.

Maybe city school students should be spread across the school district and the city schools should be sold.

If the focus schools are located in the city schools, how many parents from other schools will send their children there?

Turrill

I am concerned about further declines in enrollment.

Elementary Staff

Will we have different starting times at each school?

I am concerned that the virtual learning center will be a way to cut teachers.

Secondary Staff

I am concerned that class sizes will continue to rise.

I am not sure if the District has the ability to meet the needs of all students when we have such large class sizes.

The curriculum should challenge all students whether they will go on to college or into the workforce.

We've talked about a lot of potential changes today, and most of them will not be easy. To be a viable school district in the future and capitalize on the opportunities that change presents, everyone—school staff, parents, members of the community—will have to make some adjustments. There are two basic ways the need for these changes can be addressed by the Lapeer Community Schools: 1. The District can delay taking action as long as possible. This will mean that debt will continue to grow and programs and services will be scaled back accordingly. Or, 2. The District can face the need for change head on and begin taking action now. In short, the District can prolong the pain or face the pain and get past it. Which of these options makes the most sense to you?

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lynch | Take action now. [Unanimous] |
| Maple Grove | Take action now. [Unanimous] There is no sense postponing the inevitable. We need to capitalize on change now. |
| Mayfield | Take action now. [Unanimous] Don't prolong the pain that we are all going to feel. Share the information and make the decision so we can move forward. |
| Murphy | Take action now. [Unanimous] |
| Schickler | Take action now. [Unanimous] Go for it. You won't get anywhere by doing nothing. You can't sit on your hands. We tend to take a long time to do anything here. Hopefully this will be different. |
| Seaton | Take action now. [Unanimous] It will be easier to take action when we can see the big picture plan. |
| Turrill | Do it now. |
| Elementary Staff | Why put it off? Lapeer needs something to market, and the ideas presented are good. Delaying change is not a good idea. |
| Secondary Staff | Just do it. The District must put a lot of extra effort into communicating the changes to parents, staff and the community. |

Given our discussion on enrollment, revenue, focus schools, and tomorrow's educational program, what would be your first priority if you were in charge of planning for the future of the Lapeer Community Schools?

Lynch

I would close one high school and one or two elementary schools.

I would develop a virtual learning center.

Consider consolidating all middle school students into one building.

Maple Grove

Implement the year-round calendar.

Seriously consider having one high school.

Consider closing one or two elementary schools.

Mayfield

I would develop a plan for closing schools.

I would talk to people who have already left the District. Specifically I would want to know why they left, if things are better at their new school, and what it would take for them to return to the Lapeer Community Schools.

I would let parents and the community know as soon as possible what changes are planned for 2012/2013 and beyond.

Murphy

I would establish a marketing committee and focus on making changes at the elementary schools. Then, I would make sure that all changes flow to the middle and high school programs.

I would develop a one year, three year and five year plan that is developed with members of the community.

I would start talking about Lapeer 2020 and provide the community with yearly measureable outcomes.

I would market Turrill as an alternative to Chatfield.

I would open at least one focus school in 2012/13.

Seaton

I'd move on the art infusion focus school, but not if it is performance based.

I would not pursue *The Leader in Me* focus school; leadership should be taught in all schools.

I'd look at a school focused on environmental responsibility.

I'd realize that the Internet is easy to give up in a down economy; people might find it easy to walk away from the expense of a virtual learning center if the economy turns sour again.

Schickler

Close the smaller elementary schools and move kids to the city schools.

Make a decision on which high school to close and when.

I'd look at transportation issues that will be created by closing schools.

Turrill

I would educate the community on the problems and opportunities facing our District and then work with parents and community members to implement necessary changes.

Too many people rely on *The Lapeer Press* for their information about the District and that information isn't always correct. We need to update the website with current, factual information so everyone will have access to the correct information.

Develop clear, concise communication pieces that are shared in a variety of formats. Don't assume everyone looks to the same source for information.

Elementary Staff

Agreeing on something that lets us market the schools

Finding solutions to the excess capacity problem

Secondary Staff

I would make the necessary changes and market what the District has to offer.

I would make sure that the needs of special education students are considered when making any changes.

I would consider a flexible class schedule that offered programming during the morning, afternoon and evening.

I would identify other Districts that are currently operating a virtual learning center so we can learn what works and what doesn't.

I would consider a tax break for teachers to encourage them to move into the District.

I'd like to end our focus panel by asking this: If you could send a message to the School Board or Superintendent, or if you could give them an idea to think about, what would be your message or idea?

- Lynch
- Get a clear, concise message to the community about any anticipated changes.
 - Consider implementing at least one focus school for the 2012/13 school year.
 - Conduct Town Hall meetings to share information with the community.
 - Host more meetings like this one to keep the community informed.
 - We have outdated books that need to be replaced.
- Maple Grove
- Don't drag out the change. Work with the community to address the changes that are needed now.
- Mayfield
- Recent new hires have been well screened by the administration and seem to be doing a good job.
 - Keep evaluating staff performance to make sure everyone is doing his job.
 - Class sizes need to be reduced.
 - Give students preference for participation in a focus school if their building becomes a focus school.
 - Look at the attendance policy at the high schools to allow students more flexibility for vacations if their siblings attend a year-round school.
 - Communicate any changes for 2012/13 as early as possible.
 - Tap into area resources (such as Willows Ecology Center) for additional learning opportunities.
 - Develop a math/science focus school.
 - Develop more ecology programs for all grade levels.

If there aren't enough students to run an entire building as a focus school, can a portion of a building offer such a program?

More learning options are needed for students who are working above grade level.

Consider inter-grade mentors to challenge students.

Don't just make change for the sake of change. Evaluate new programs and share the results with parents and staff.

Put fun back into the classroom. Class sizes are so large that teachers don't have time to be creative.

Teachers seem to be out of the classroom a lot attending meetings. Can't those meetings be held outside of student instruction time?

Develop a pre-kindergarten checklist for parents so they will know what students are expected to know before coming to school.

Murphy

A math and science focus school would be more unique than an art infusion focus school or *The Leader in Me* focus school.

Focus schools should have a class size cap.

Keep the TAG program.

The District already offers many programs that the community/parents do not know about, e.g., TAG.

The kindergarten curriculum needs to be updated. Students who have attended preschool are bored in kindergarten.

Teachers need more support with technology instruction.

More paraprofessionals are needed so teachers can focus on students who understand a concept and are ready to move on.

Take a closer look at the middle school concept. Students need more in-depth instruction.

Publish more school information in the LA View.

Reduce class size at all levels.

Accuracy and a well thought out plan are more important than speed when making changes.

Schickler

The teaching of students should be a partnership between the schools and the parents.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our kids could make virtual visits to schools in other countries to learn about their history, their culture... anything?

Things have greatly improved for special needs students. The District should market itself to these parents as the place that really listens.

Seaton

According to rumor, Davidson is planning to send buses into our neighborhood next fall.

Common sense seems to be lacking; for example, just now we are beginning to "go green" by shutting off lights. Isn't this an idea that's been around for 20 years?

The process is important. We have to commit to the long haul. Progress shouldn't stop if the Board changes or Superintendent Wandrie leaves.

Superintendent Wandrie appears to be a straight-shooter. We have to help him make good things happen.

Finally, I am glad to see the beginnings of a plan.

What's neat is that all of the ideas presented by Superintendent Wandrie offer options. You can opt in or out, or you can give input to shape/refine the idea.

Turrill

Share this presentation with the community as well as parents.

If we don't start making changes and offering more options, families will choose other districts.

If schools are closed, how will staff and students be reallocated?

When making decisions, there shouldn't be any sacred cows.

Consider a five-day kindergarten option.

Update the website more frequently.

What will happen to the buildings if they are closed? The sites still need to be maintained so they don't become an eyesore like Hadley.

Elementary Staff People should be allowed to participate in Lapeer Community School District programs only if they pay their fair share.

I'd like to know the possibility of a five-day kindergarten.

Secondary Staff Marketing the District will be a costly but worthwhile effort.

Consider a more personal curriculum for all students -- especially special education students.

Look at the "tracks" or "career paths" systems to help identify classes students should be taking.

Are special education enrollment numbers dropping in the same proportion as the total student body?

Don't leave people without children in school out of the communication loop. They still vote and need to know what is going on--the good and the bad.

Provide parents with a potential list of class offerings through the virtual learning center. Be sure to include information about the flexibility for learning any time, any place.

Maybe students should be recommended by teachers as a requirement to enroll in classes offered through the virtual learning center.

Work with business leaders to develop career readiness standards.

As a District and society are we moving away from cursive writing?

Develop a clear, concise plan for the implementation of any focus school. Make sure you anticipate the questions/concerns of staff, parents and students.