

January 2012

IN FOCUS

Innovation:
The Future of
Lapeer Community
Schools



SENTIMENT STRONG FOR INNOVATIVE FUTURE FOR LCS

Community Survey, focus panels show support for increased options in education

The call is crystal clear: It's time to innovate to secure a successful and sustainable future for our District.

Over the course of the last several months, we have been in the midst of a strategic planning process aimed at innovating Lapeer Community Schools to serve the needs of our students into the future.

As school districts across the state are dealing with new realities in education -- decreased funding, increased competition, excess capacity -- different approaches are being used to arrive at solutions.

In Lapeer we have not approached the process with an agenda, but rather with positive vision for our future.

Throughout the process of community engagement, there has been one consistent drumbeat: *For parents, innovation is about options.*

For the elementary parents we've talked to, the option of year-round Focus Schools was quite popular. This Focus concept has been shown to increase student achievement and at the same time offer new opportunities for parents and students.

It is important to note that the Focus School concept is just one part of a much broader strategic planning process. So please take a moment to read more about what Focus Schools could offer the students of Lapeer Community Schools.

-- Matt Wandrie, Superintendent



Focus Panels

Earlier this month, focus panels were held with parents from all our elementary buildings as well as with LCS staff members. A consistent theme emerged: *parents want options for students.*

MYTH-BUSTER: FOCUS SCHOOLS

Confronting the myths and realities of the focus school concept

The concept of Focus Schools (sometimes referred to as Magnet Schools) has been around for many years. Over the course of time, many misperceptions about these schools have arisen.

We want to clear up some of the myths about Focus Schools to give you a better idea of what they are all about. Further, we hope to give you a clearer picture of what Focus Schools in our District would look like.

Myth: They are for the elite.

Focus Schools are designed to attract students from diverse backgrounds, often placing a special emphasis on a particular focus to enhance the core curriculum. Students in Focus Schools must still meet state standards in the core subjects: math, reading, writing, science and social studies.

Myth: They cost more.

There is no additional cost to attend a Focus School. Many Focus Schools do offer low-cost enrichment opportunities to parents during off times. Again, it's about options.

Myth: Siblings would be separated.

Siblings would not be split between schools, if one is selected all siblings may attend.

Myth: Students are hand-picked.

Students are selected for enrollment into Focus Schools based on a public blind-draw lottery system. In this way, all students have an equal opportunity to apply and enroll in a Focus School. Further, fourth-graders currently enrolled in a school transitioning into a Focus School would have the option to stay in their school for their final year. Siblings would also have the option to stay as well.

Myth: Parents must provide transportation.

While there are some examples of Focus Schools that do not provide transportation for students, Focus Schools operated by Lapeer Community Schools would offer busing to students just as it is offered today.

Myth: Year-round Focus Schools do not have a summer break.

Students in Focus Schools operating on a year-round calendar are in school the same number of days as students learning on the traditional calendar and still enjoy a



Reality:
Focus Schools enhance the traditional curriculum

summer break. Year-round students just have shorter, more frequent breaks. In some cases, year-round students start school in August. This early-start helps teachers close the “summer gap” in student achievement that a long summer can create. The year-round calendar also decreases the amount of time needed for review and increases student retention.

Myth: They are the solution to our long-term challenges.

Focus Schools provide choices to parents, unique marketing opportunities to the District, and new tools for teachers to tailor-make programs to prepare students for the careers of the future. Still, Focus Schools are only one part of a much broader plan to put LCS on a successful and sustainable path for all students.

Need more information?

For a more in-depth look at our strategic planning process, visit our website and click on the “Transitions for Tomorrow” icon.

There you will find a six-page brochure outlining the process as well as results from our community survey.

Visit

LapeerSchools.org



Transitions for Tomorrow

Attend a town hall meeting

Throughout the month of February, LCS Superintendent Matt Wandrie will be holding a series of town hall meetings in our buildings to discuss the future of our District. Please watch the website for a schedule of town hall meetings.