



# Plainville Community Schools

Thoughtexchange Results

Executive Summary

# Introduction

At Plainville Community Schools we believe it is essential to hear from all of our stakeholders regarding school district related topics and issues that are important, to help shape the future direction of the district. However, it is difficult to get everyone together to engage in insightful conversation about our schools. Rather than use a traditional survey, we recently facilitated an online conversation using Thoughtexchange to gather as many thoughts and ideas as possible from our stakeholder groups, including faculty, staff, parents, students, and the community at large.

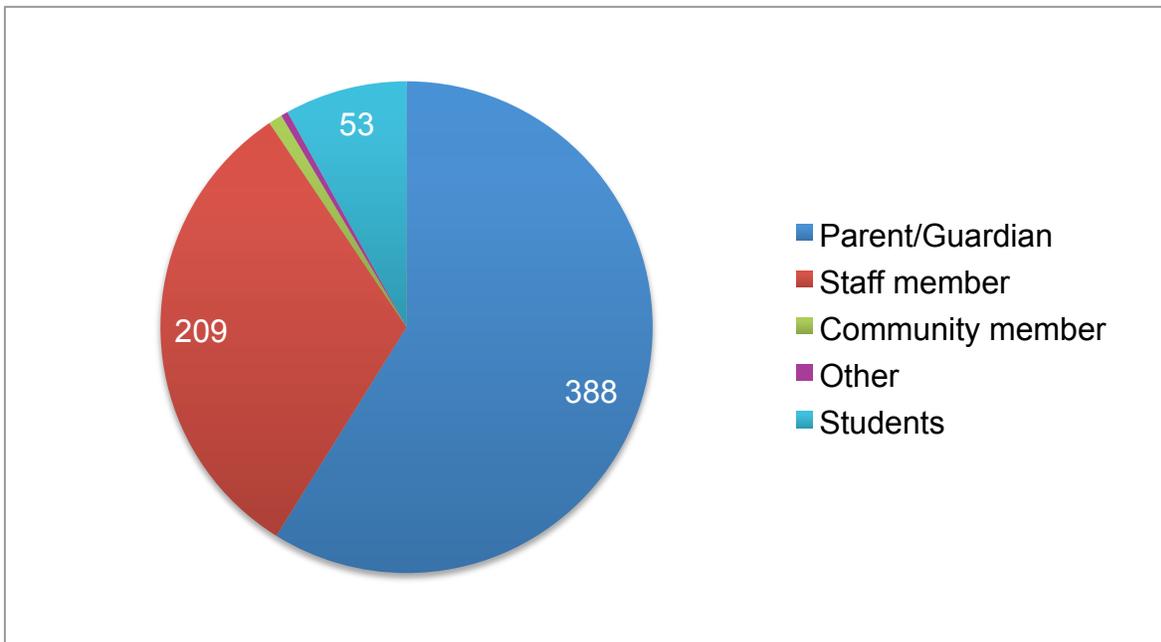
Through this process, we focused on four open-ended questions that gave participants the opportunity to share their individual thoughts and react to the thoughts of fellow participants. Our goal for this process was to identify strengths, concerns and thoughts about the direction of Plainville Community Schools going forward.

This process was intended to gather a broad range of information that will help to inform the district’s upcoming strategic planning process. We also hope that it builds stronger and more open connections with parents, students, staff and community members.

The following pages highlight a summary of the Thoughtexchange information gathering process. Please note that the information shared reflects participants’ individual thoughts and perceptions. Further, sample comments included with the questions on pages 4 & 5 were taken “verbatim” from the Thoughtexchange process - none of the language, spelling, grammar, etc., has been altered.

# Process Demographics

Each participant is only counted once – regardless of whether he or she took part in the Share step, the Star step, or both. The numbers below represent the unique stakeholders across the community who took part in the conversation, broken down by role.



# The Thoughtexchange Process

Thoughtexchange is a group discussion app for modern leaders who want to build relationships while making informed decisions. A simple process ensures everyone is heard, everyone learns and important ideas emerge.

The diagram below shows the three steps of the Thoughtexchange process. On the following pages, you can find the details of the questions asked and a summary of the findings.



Share answers to open-ended questions



Add stars to thoughts shared by others



Discover what is important to the group

## Participation

**51,027**

STARS  
ASSIGNED

**659**

PARTICIPANTS

**1,708**

THOUGHTS  
CONTRIBUTED

## Questions

Q1. What are the things you appreciate about our school or District this year?

Q2. What are some concerns you have about our school or District this year?

Q3. What are some things you would like our students to experience that they currently do not?

Q4. What are some other things you would like to say about our school or District this year?

# Summary of Results

The following are thoughts that received the most stars in each question. As you review them it is important to remember that unlike surveys where people assess previously determined ideas, in Thoughtexchange all thoughts were contributed by participants, hence reflecting participants' individual thoughts and perceptions. Also a reminder that sample comments included with the questions on the following two pages were taken "verbatim" from the Thoughtexchange process - none of the language, spelling, grammar, etc., has been altered.

## What are the things you appreciate about our school or District this year?

**I appreciate the hard working teachers at our schools.** Plainville is lucky to have many dedicated teachers who balance challenging their students while making learning fun.

**School cleanliness.** We highly commend the janitorial crew for all their hard work and dedication. The school is spotless all of the time.

**Technology as part of the growing global community.** Students are becoming experts at an earlier age and able to keep up with their counterparts around the country and the world. Reading beyond the classroom and learning about the world around them, not just from printed material from the digital age of videos, podcasts, blogging, and skyping.

**Facilities.** School buildings are clean and well maintained

**Extracurricular participation by teachers and staff.** Many teachers and staff go above and beyond their daily job requirements and willingly participate in many after school events for the children. The children love having their teachers participate with them and the teachers cherish the time they spend with them doing this.

## What are some concerns you have about our school or District this year?

**Common Core.** I think teachers should be able to teach in whichever way a child learns best. If a teacher see a child having a hard time one way they should be able to teach it many different ways. Let the teachers be teachers. Stop pushing the kids to learn so fast and teach them what they need for life.

**Class size.** I know you can find data to support many theories, however, I see that smaller class size DOES make a positive difference.

**Discipline should be more of a focus in the school.** Students should be made more accountable for their behavior

**Teachers should have the freedom to accomplish curriculum goals.** Teachers need the freedom to accomplish curriculum goals using their own teaching style and strengths. Classes should not look exactly the same.

**Providing students with the academic opportunities and rigor needed to be college or career ready.**

**What are some things you would like our students to experience that they currently do not?**

**Real World Skills.** It's understandable that we are young, but what about learning how to buy a car, deal with tax, mortgages, social issues, jobs, and things beyond college? We are book smart, but many kids don't have the support from families or even worse any family that can really help them with these sorts of things.

**Finances.** I believe that the high school, or even the middle school, should have a mandatory finances class. These school have many mandatory classes that teach important skills, and managing one's budget should be added to the roster.

**I would like our high school students to do more job shadowing.** I understand that job shadowing is available if the student takes the initiative and knows what they want to shadow. These kids need more guidance in this area so they can get hands on exposure to the many different careers that are available to them. Many don't know where to start.

**Respect and appreciation for their surroundings.** Students should have a bigger part in taking care of their school. Students could take part in gardening projects, both flower gardens and vegetable gardens. They should help with fall and spring clean ups. This will help build pride and respect in themselves as well as their school.

**Technology.** Technology is always evolving and shaping the future employment landscape. Perhaps more STEAM-type programs and other technology geared curriculum would be beneficial.

**What are some other things you would like to say about our school or District this year?**

**Fights in school.** My child says there are a lot of fights in school. Take a tougher stance, do not be afraid to inconvenience parents and hand out meaningful consequences.

**Mutual respect.** There needs to be a clear mutual respect between the students and the adults in the building. Too often, students feel they can say/do what they please and have no consequence.

**Please bring back recess.** Wanting students to exercise is a good thing. Disrupting classes, children throwing away their lunches so they can go outside for 5 minutes, and eliminating the one place where they can practice their social skills is a mistake. Please bring back the longer lunch period.

**Tutors in primary.** We heard that tutors push in and work with teachers and students at the primary level. It is wonderful that the district has additional supports for the children.

**Excellent school and District.** I am proud to be a part of Plainville Public Schools! I think this a hard-working and progressive district.

# Summary of Interest Analysis

An interest analysis was performed based on participants' starring patterns. This process resulted in themes of common and special interest. The respondents as a whole appreciate the work and efforts of teachers and staff, but have concerns about the **instructional style** of some teachers. This group also has concerns that suitable candidates be selected for the Plainville High School **leadership positions**.

Participants in the first special interest group have concerns about **discipline and student behavior**, and thoughts about **student recognition** and **classroom/academic support**.

Participants in the second interest group have concerns about **Professional Development and collaboration time**, some indicating more time was needed, while others express concerns about the additional **shortened days**.

Finally the respondents in the third interest group appreciate the way the district manages the schools, but are concerned about the **conditions of some school facilities** (Middle School of Plainville and Wheeler Elementary) that might need upgrades.