



**TO:** Jacksonville's Public Education Advocates  
**FROM:** Trey Csar, President, Jacksonville Public Education Fund  
**DATE:** June 7, 2017  
**RE:** Addendum to Summary and Recommendations for 2017 ONE by ONE Convention:  
Students at the Center of the Conversation Memo

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Since 2012, the Jacksonville Public Education Fund has partnered with DCPS and community stakeholders to gather community input about the greatest challenges facing our public schools and the biggest opportunities to affect positive change. In response to the desire from the communities we serve to have an opportunity to discuss the district's recent leadership transition as well as to celebrate the culmination of our year-long Student Voice work, we at the Jacksonville Public Education Fund held the ONE by ONE Convention: Students at the Center of the Conversation. At this year's Convention, education stakeholders (parents, students, school leaders and community members) came together to determine and discuss what priorities the next DCPS Superintendent should focus on. Below is a long-form summary and analysis of the questions asked and the common themes that surfaced from these discussions.

#### Question 1

**You have the opportunity to talk to the next superintendent at the elevator, what would you say to that person? What are some key things you would want an incoming superintendent to know/learn about your school or your community?**

The most common things we heard were:

1. The importance of the new superintendent **authentically engaging and listening to diverse stakeholders**, especially students. The importance of leveraging the perspectives of diverse teachers and caregivers was also named; as was the importance of including special groups such as English Language Learners, students with special needs and all schools.
  - a. *"Come in and see what [it] is like to be a student or teacher. Get a perspective. Need to come in or send representatives to see what is going on. See what it takes to work the program. From textbook doesn't always work."*
  - b. *"Try to elevate what is going on at district level (student voice heard at district level)."*
  - c. *"Go to every school; be active, incorporate their ideas, [develop] relationships, [investigate] what they need."*
  - d. *"Superintendent going to more classrooms. See what is going on, talking to students themselves more."*



2. **Closeness to schools.** Many participants expressed that not all schools receive the same attention or recognition, which in their words, possibly limits the superintendent's understanding and ability to connect with all stakeholders. Participants expect the next superintendent to be flexible and understand that each school has specific needs.
  - a. *"Spend more time at schools. Need to hear students."*
  - b. *"Can we access you? Can I bring my problems straight to you and [inform] your strategic planning? Will you ask me the problems too?"*
  - c. *"Schools aren't cookie cut[ter], we need flexibility."*
  - d. *"Don't discriminate against schools. Reputation is impacting the treatment of schools."*
  
3. **Keep the momentum.** Most participants felt that the district is moving in the right direction and while some adjustments are needed, radical change, with limited knowledge can set us back.
  - a. *"Keep momentum, stay involved, continue."*
  - b. *"Continuity; no need to reset. Kids experience a lot of frustration with so many changes."*
  - c. *"Learn first, not immediate changes."*
  - d. *"How do we keep the things we have in place to keep the momentum in schools moving forward, considering potential impact of this pending bill?"*
  
4. The issue of **teacher retention** was among the topics that participants would like the new superintendent to be aware of.
  - a. *"We have great teachers; more consistent because although change can be good, we need more consistency."*
  - b. *"Plans for teacher retention, strategy for this."*
  - c. *"Continuity in schools/environment. Constant administrators, teachers, testing."*
  - d. *"Increase the number of teachers going into field and retention."*

## Question 2

### What would you say makes an excellent superintendent?

Participants at the ONE by ONE Convention identified three main characteristics that define an excellent superintendent:

1. Ability to **authentically listen** to diverse stakeholders, especially students.
  - a. *"Listen and take advice. Be more involved in schools to get opinions from students and adults."*
  - b. *"Hear different opinions especially for a big decision."*
  - c. *"Present in schools, in [the] field, not just in [the] office; having a panel of students."*
  - d. *"He understands what we go through sometimes. Look at the school from students' perspective."*



- e. *"Relatable to others, especially students."*
  - f. *"Listens to students, following with actions."*
  - g. *"One that cares about the students and not in it for the money."*
  - h. *"Superintendent that has good listening skills."*
  - i. *"Vision of being student focus[ed], regardless of the politics."*
2. Has a **permanent and constant interaction with school-level personnel** and incorporates their perspective in his/her decision making.
- a. *"Someone who thinks of all schools, understands the kids' environments, have confidence in what they do; knows and understand students' positions, therefore, making decisions that benefit students."*
  - b. *"Understands what's happening and fights for students who are most impacted."*
  - c. *"Comes to schools to talk to principals and teachers to see and understand what is happening."*
  - d. *"Actually care about students and takes actions about their concerns."*
  - e. *"Personal visits to school, have a presence in the community."*
3. Someone who is a **transformational leader** with a proven record of effectiveness.
- a. *"Build a culture of trust with the community."*
  - b. *"Come to schools more, hear what is happening; be aware of what is happening at the school level; know the differences between schools; make plans based on needs."*
  - c. *"Staff delegation."*
  - d. *"Strong leader, understanding and know what to tell others"*
  - e. *"Decentralize and let teachers do; flexible with school decisions."*
  - f. *"Good listener, facilitator, leader empowering others to bring their voice."*
  - g. *"Good leadership, tactical delegation."*
  - h. *"To know what the community wants."*
  - i. *"Proven record of good leadership"*
  - j. *"Transparency around reasons for change."*

### Question 3

What priorities should be the focus of the new superintendent?

- 1. To **personally engage and communicate with the many education stakeholders** intentionally and with transparency. The stakeholders feel a lot of knowledge that can be gained from intimate listening, learning, and sharing within and between stakeholder groups.
  - a. **Summary of Overall Responses**
    - i. *"Sharing a concept of success"*



- ii. *"Taking in opinions"*
  - iii. *"Listen and learn"*
  - iv. *"Why—voice explain realities of budget"*
  - v. *"LISTENING MATTERS"*
  - b. Summary of Student Stakeholder Responses**
    - i. *"Student voice/opinion"*
    - ii. *"Get us, the students involved"*
    - iii. *"Hearing from students (the stakeholders that matter most)"*
    - iv. *"Feedback so students want to participate"*
  - c. Summary of Parent Stakeholder Responses**
    - i. *"Hearing directly from students and parents from all schools"*
    - ii. *"Better relationships between him/her and the students & parents"*
  - d. Summary of Community Stakeholder Responses**
    - i. *"Community within decision making process"*
    - ii. *"Involve entire community's input/voice"*
    - iii. *"Community—understand how they can impact the community"*
  - e. Summary of Teacher Stakeholder Responses**
    - i. *"Focus on equal opportunity for teachers and students to have a voice"*
    - ii. *"Teacher voices"*
  - f. Desire for Intimate District Engagement**
    - i. *"Get rid of district office downtown and have employees work out of schools"*
    - ii. *"Get more involved in school personally"*
    - iii. *"Be visible to all students/community"*
    - iv. *"Be accessible!"*
2. Much of the discussion revolved around **offering a variety of classes, activities, and experiential learning opportunities**. The conversations highlighted a desire for practical course offerings, vocational training, and much more!
- a. *"More electives—like dance, art, languages"*
  - b. *"More electives and foreign language options"*
  - c. *"Dual-enrollment expansion: AP not always getting credit"*
  - d. *"Expand sports programs at magnet schools"*
  - e. *"More Black/diverse history: All emphasis on European or American history, "Understand modern impact"*
  - f. *"Increase field trips in high school to further engage students and learning"*
  - g. *"Emphasize real work experience and translation of skills"*
  - h. *"Trade programs at every school as alternative to college"*
  - i. *"Summer school for getting ahead and taking vocational courses"*



- j. *"Financial class to learn about debt and managing money"*
3. **The equitable distribution and use of resources and services.** The conversation included the allocation of resources to certain schools and capital infrastructure, but also covered topic related to students who have special needs.
- a. *"Find equitable finances for all schools"*
  - b. *"ESE students are PRIORITY: a. Inclusiveness, resources, and make sure they are equipped, Don't forget this population"*
  - c. *"Inequitable resources (Stanton/Paxon) more opportunities: What about Terry Parker, need more funding and need those courses too"*
  - d. *"Equity"*
  - e. *"Remain inclusive, recognize diversity, and increase access"*
  - f. *"Unique solutions for each school"*
  - g. *"Inclusion of special needs students' collaboration"*
  - h. *"Need more books in classrooms"*
  - i. *"Find equitable finances for all schools"*
  - j. *"Teachers should not have to pay for classroom things out of their pocket"*
  - k. *"Understand pros and cons of technology used in the classroom (30 student 4 computers not effective)"*
  - l. *"School renovations (facilities)!"*
  - m. *"Nice, clean schools"*
4. There is a desire for **more investment in educators** so that the district can attract and retain high-quality teachers for their students. The investment includes paying more, but also providing more professional development opportunities. This investment is extended to school leaders so that they can have more autonomy and provision in the curriculum that might entice other educators to stay.
- a. *"Incentives for teachers"*
  - b. *"Increase Pay"*
  - c. *"Value admin, faculty—retain quality educators"*
  - d. *"Professional development for teachers to include reflection & action"*
  - e. *"We want our principals to trust us instead of viewing us as someone about to do something wrong"*
  - f. *"School level freedom to make decisions that support a successful school"*
  - g. *"Help public schools have better curriculum & standards (maybe revise to help student more)"*
5. This priority is an extension of Priority 3 on Equity in the there should be a priority to **use marketing to change the negative perceptions associated with some of the schools** in the district. In that same



vein, there is a desire, as a whole, to **shift the climate and culture of the schools** from negative to positive. Delegates identified tools and strategies that could help to create more favorable school culture.

- a. *"Change reputation/perspective of low-income/unfavorable schools"*
  - b. *"Community marketing"*
  - c. *"Serving and improving high-needs schools"*
  - d. *"Accessible information in all school and based in one location"*
  - e. *"Change connotation/new narrative"*
  - f. *"Bullying/school culture"*
  - g. *"Concert focused on bullying, substance abuse, fighting and racism"*
  - h. *"Disciplinary structure changes: Keep students in class"*
  - i. *"To focus on having more excitement in school"*
6. The delegates want the next superintendent to **prioritize action and build capacity** to help achieve the results we all want to see.
- a. *"Want people to follow through - hear all the time 'we are going to do \_\_,' but it never happens."*
  - b. *"Keep the promise to our community, regardless of who the next superintendent is."*
  - c. *"Know what's going on so that they can make sure they have programs and people that can help when they have a crisis or need help"*
  - d. *"Having mentors in place"*
  - e. *"If a student is struggling they need to have a program that acts like a 'net' so they don't have to wait until the end for things like summer school"*
  - f. *"Delegating committees/people"*
  - g. *"Using organizational advocates to manage 'crisis' behavior—City Year"*
  - h. *"Improve in human capital"*
  - i. *"Building community to support (more teachers student involvement)"*
7. The delegates would like the next superintendent to **prioritize political engagement**. They want the next superintendent to be proactively involved and to inform those surrounding education in the community.
- a. *"Stronger relationship to district/state decision making"*
  - b. *"Embrace and make most of what comes out of Tallahassee"*
  - c. *"Legislature—proactive planning to combat legislative changes to protect our schools"*
  - d. *"Political climate—what are the impacts"*
  - e. *"Being involved/informed policy wise at state and national levels"*