



# School Changes 2019

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# School Changes Community Engagement Report





# School Changes 2019

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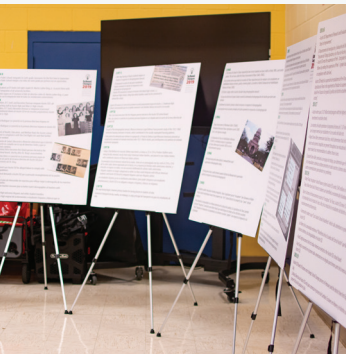
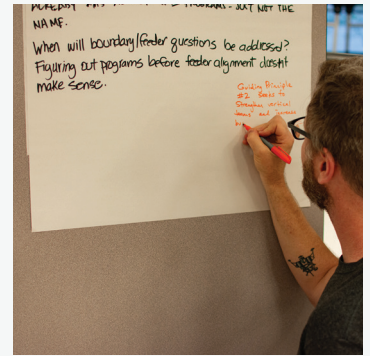
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# REINVENT

# Active Listening Sessions

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Reinvest phase, Austin ISD hosted community meetings following the publication of the School Changes Version 1.0 document, which included 39 scenario options. Each scenario option served as a starting point for input to improve academics, equity and facilities across our school district. An estimated 1,700 people participated in a series of 21 community conversations. The formal community engagement process ended on Oct. 10, 2019.



**21**  
Community  
Listening Sessions

**1,696**  
Participants  
Signed In

**2,764**  
Online  
Comments





# Active Listening Sessions

The community conversations were held in schools that may be affected by the proposed scenario options. The active listening sessions focused on gathering feedback from campus communities on:

1. "What do you like about this scenario option and what do you see as strengths?"
2. "What concerns do you have about this scenario option and what else is missing?"



Of the 1,696 parents, students, Austin ISD employees and community members who attended the community conversations, many attendees participated in multiple sessions over the course of four weeks.

The meetings were held primarily at schools included in the document as a proposed consolidation or closure. Schools included were Pease Elementary, Metz Elementary, Sims Elementary, Webb Middle School, Brooke Elementary, Maplewood Elementary, Ridgetop Elementary, Palm Elementary, Joslin Elementary, Dawson Elementary, Bertha Sadler Means, and Pecan Springs Elementary. These meetings were scheduled based on input from principals with the intent of reaching as many parents as possible, and were scheduled during mornings, evenings hours, as well as on Saturday. Meetings held at an elementary school were typically held in the mornings, while middle and high school meetings were held in the evenings. Childcare and refreshments were also provided, and simultaneous language interpretation was available at every meeting.

To facilitate a healthy dialogue the room was set up in a large circle. This meeting style offered everyone the chance to sit down, facing each other, and to create the opportunity for collaboration with parents, community and Austin ISD staff. A lead facilitator supported the flow of the conversation engaging parents, teachers, students and subject matter experts from Austin ISD. The meetings lasted anywhere from two to six hours.

In addition to the meetings, Austin ISD collected feedback from the community through an online tool called

ThoughtExchange. More than 2,764 comments were received, and the comments are included in the summary.

In the Reinvest phase, administration at Austin ISD recommended scenario options to the Board of Trustees after listening to the community through a robust engagement series and in consideration of the board-adopted guiding principles with equity in mind. Austin ISD wants to fundamentally change the way they deliver education to students, how they train and engage with staff, and how they make decisions around equity to ensure access and opportunity for all students in our district.

The communications and community engagement team produced a report that contains themes, ideas and concerns that we heard during the community engagement meetings. The report was shared during the evaluation of the scenario options.

A majority of the feedback from parents and the community expressed concern about the proposed school closures and their lack of trust in Austin ISD's process and timeline. Several themes emerged, which are highlighted in this report, along with specific ideas suggested by participants for the district's consideration.



# Active Listening Sessions

## THEMES

The list below summarizes the comments and concerns heard at the meetings and online about the School Changes scenario options.



- Parents and community members foresee difficulty in merging the culture of schools that are consolidated in terms of size, community and programs.
- Parents expressed concerns about the emotional well-being of teachers, students, and staff, given the uncertainty in the timeline and future bond. Parents also want continuity of teaching staff.
- Parents and community members expressed frustration and lack of trust that the decision-making timeline is too short for there to be ample and thoughtful consideration of community feedback and full evaluation of all potential options.
- Parents and community members requested the matrix, data and decision-making rationale. The lack of transparency in sharing the data was pointed out as a significant hurdle for the community to trust the district's intentions.
- Parents expressed being perplexed that boundaries are not being addressed as part of the scenario options. Several campus communities believed their boundaries were the reason their campus is currently underutilized.
- Parents and community members questioned the level of inequity in the plan in terms of impacts to lower socio-economic status and students of color. Also, the east-west divide was discussed in every meeting, and there is a belief that the plan perpetuates Austin's racist past and present.

- Parents and community members shared their questions about what happens to the buildings and real estate once facilities are closed and how that process is carried out by Austin ISD.
- Parents and community members were skeptical of the potential of a successful bond program in order to facilitate the modernization of schools on the closure list that currently have renovation/facility improvement needs that are unfunded.
- Parents and community members voiced concern about moving students to lower performing schools or buildings that are in worse condition than the ones they are currently schooled.
- Parents and community members requested that Austin ISD review and adjust feeder patterns to create greater continuity of academic programs for students.
- Parents and community members want Austin ISD to ensure that students who transfer to the affected campuses are "grandfathered" in or there is a clear plan for continuity for students.

*We also recorded the repeated concerns expressed about the loss of AISD students due to competition with charters.*



# Active Listening Sessions

## SPECIFIC IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

### Pease Elementary

**(Schools affected: Pease Elementary)**

- Create Pease Elementary as a districtwide model for Early Civic Engagement curriculum.

### Metz Elementary

**(Schools affected: Metz and Sanchez Elementary)**

- Make dress code consistent for student populations from both Metz and Sanchez to eliminate distractions for students who are currently co-located at Metz.
- Ensure the history and culture of each school is preserved to reflect the community's value and importance for both Metz and Sanchez.
- Include Sanchez in Eastside Early College High School feeder pattern.

### Sims Elementary

**(Schools affected: Norman and Sims Elementary)**

- Protect the legacy of long-time Texas educator Mary Jane Sims.

### Webb Middle

**(Schools affected: Webb and Dobie Middle)**

- Provide bus service for Webb students to travel to Dobie.
- Ensure the seamless transfer of programs to other schools that are receiving students, such as the food pantry and family resource center.
- Move Arts program from McCallum to Northeast ECHS.
- Ensure continued support for English Language Learners. There is concern about moving two high ELL, low Socioeconomic Status populations into one school.
- Create attractive school programs to attract Northeast Austin families to the middle schools.





# Active Listening Sessions

## Brooke Elementary

**(Schools affected: Brooke Elementary)**

- Support Brooke's student population growth trend by changing boundaries, adding programs and keeping it open.
- Brooke Elementary has embraced the STEAM concept and has successfully developed and incorporated the program into the academic curriculum and culture of the school. This program should be preserved.
- Add fee based childcare and pre-k to Brooke.
- Consolidate Oak Springs into Brooke.
- Some expressed a sense that East Austin feels like their school community and would prefer to stay at a school north of the river such as Zavala or Metz, rather than returning to Linder.



## Maplewood Elementary

**(Schools affected: Maplewood and Campbell Elementary)**

- Begin collaboration around consolidation with Campbell now.
- Desire to see the site benefit local artists in collaboration with the schools.

## Districtwide Meeting at Austin High

- Move Garza to Reagan HS campus.
- Do not duplicate magnet applications and application-based programs already placed in schools.
- Close Mendez due to not meeting standards.
- Include a community school model in Austin ISD plans or as an alternative strategy rather than closure.
- Integrate different bilingual models (Examples given: 50/50, 80/20).
- Improve Crockett High facility.
- Route under-performing school's students to high-performing schools.
- Provide more administrative support and space at Green Tech and staff with competent Green Tech Director.
- Allow immigrant families to vote on proposals and bonds.
- Utilize savings from School Changes strictly to support teachers.
- Create funds for classroom supplies for teachers.
- Publish and formalize a mentorship program across the verticals.
- Create a community exclusively for students with special needs and on the spectrum by repurposing a closed facility.
- Provide families in hardship to receive access to technology.
- Allow transfer students to be grandfathered in when boundaries change or campuses are consolidated.
- Require Austin ISD Board of Trustees to attend Undoing Racism training before voting.
- Apply Austin HS Academies Extension to Patton & Small.
- Create a staff position to manage transition for school consolidations so parents, teachers, and principals have one person to call with questions and concerns.



# Active Listening Sessions

## Ridgetop Elementary

(Schools affected: Ridgetop and Reilly Elementary)

- Commit to dual language program.
- Make Ridgetop/Reilly K-8 wall-to-wall dual language campus.
- Make T.A. Brown receiving school for Ridgetop.
- Allow transfer students to be grandfathered in when boundaries change or campuses are consolidated.
- Staff expressed a desire to see greater effort to bring ELLs to campus or move program where there are already ELLs.
- Desire to see environmental education and green space/outdoor learning programming continue at new site.
- Ridgetop staff desire to continue teaching at a campus with the same model/philosophy regarding dual-language.



Geographically Close Meeting at

## Northeast High School

(Schools affected: Webb MS, Dobie MS, Northeast ECHS, Ridgetop ES, Reilly ES)

- Utilize Sadler Means MS as a co-ed community middle school.
- Do not close Ridgetop ES and modernize building for consolidation.



Geographically Close Meeting at

## Martin

(Schools affected: Brooke ES, Govalle ES, Linder ES, Pease ES, Zavala ES, Metz ES, Sanchez ES)

- Create Magnet School within the community.
- Preserve multigenerational and culturally relevant aspect of schools.



## Joslin Elementary

(Schools affected: Joslin Elementary)

- Maintain Mandarin language program development with existing TEA grant.
- Particular concern cited about the lack of a District plan for the future of a substantial and vulnerable "life skills" community at Joslin





# Active Listening Sessions

## Dawson Elementary

**(Schools affected: Dawson Elementary School)**

- Plan for students who don't want dual language program.
- Invest in Dawson to become pilot for Special Education/504 in a dual-language, elementary setting.
- Allow transfer students to be grandfathered in when boundaries change or campuses are consolidated.



## Campbell Elementary

**(Schools affected: Maplewood ES, Campbell ES, Blackshear ES)**

- Keep the LL Campbell name for historical importance.
- Fund Parent Support Specialist position.



## Bertha Sadler Means YWLA

**(Schools affected: Bertha Sadler Means YWLA)**

- Provide more support and safety for the young women that will move to Northeast Early College HS.
- Do not build new Mueller school and use funds for east side schools.
- Keep name to honor civil rights leader.
- Create a co-location of single gender schools.



## Gus Garcia YMLA

**(Schools affected: Sadler Means YWLA, Garcia YMLA, Pecan Springs ES, Winn ES, Pickle ES, Sims ES, Norman ES)**

- Modernize Bertha Sadler Means. Put BSM into New Northeast Middle School until the modernized building is in place.



## Pecan Springs Elementary

**(Schools affected: Pecan Springs Elementary)**

- Continue with rotary club partnerships (Character program and Ethics Program).



# Active Listening Sessions

## Palm Elementary

**(Schools affected: Palm Elementary)**

- Send Palm students to Blazier.
- Plan safety measures for flooding at Perez.
- Transfer Linder Pre-K back to Linder ES and Blazier ES Pre-K back to Blazier ES.
- Build infrastructure for wireless technology program to support the technology students use.
- Remodel and expand Palm ES with next bond.
- Bring outdoor leadership program to Palm ES.
- Partner with tech companies to bring tech programs to students at Palm ES.
- Glacier 4-5 year-olds could attend Palm Early Childhood Center.



**Geographically Close Meeting at**

## Crockett Early College High School

**(Schools affected: Joslin ES, Dawson ES, St. Elmo ES, Galindo ES)**

- Renovate Dawson ES since it can house the 500+ capacity.
- Create micro communities within new schools.
- Research future growth in Dawson area and reconsider closing school.



**Geographically Close Meeting at**

## Bedichek Middle School

**(Schools affected: Palm ES, Perez ES, Langford ES, Covington MS)**

- Maintain programs that were built within each school.
- Make Crockett Fine Arts Academy.
- Rethink grouping of kids (6-12 grade).
- Include education history timeline on AISD website.

