

Albuquerque Public Schools Strategic Plan and Aligned ARPA Spending Plan Feedback and Information Sessions Summary Report

Prepared for the Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education

Prepared by
Strategic Analysis & Program Research (SAPR)

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Executive Summary

On August 31, 2021 and September 7, 2021, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) hosted virtual town hall forums to raise awareness and seek input from community, staff, and stakeholders on the district's five-year strategic plan and the aligned spending plan for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Strategic Analysis & Program Research (SAPR) performed qualitative analyses of the comments and feedback from these town hall forums.

The forums were attended by employees, families, and community members. Overall, the APS community believed that the plans were on the right track. Most participants of the town hall forums believed the outlined pillars and goals described in the strategic plan and the aligned ARPA spending plan would address many of the district's needs. However, many believed the plans required more details, reprioritizing, or even the addition of overlooked areas.

Key Findings

Based on an analysis of the 122 actively participating attendees at the town hall forums, SAPR finds the following:

- Top priorities: academic conditions, social-emotional behavioral health services, staff retention/recruitment, and facility repairs and upgrades
- Many of the top priorities fall under an umbrella of concerns stemming from the pandemic (e.g., unfinished learning, pandemic's impact on student/staff mental health, rehiring staff and additional staff needed to deal with unfinished learning & behavioral/physical health of staff/students, and upgrades to HVAC for safe air conditions)
 - Parents and Teachers were most concerned with academic conditions (general, special education, accelerated learning, and unfinished learning)
 - APS employees (non-teachers) were most concerned with behavioral health and social-emotional learning
 - Community members were most concerned with the pandemic, as well as behavioral health and social-emotional learning
- In addition to offering input and feedback on the strategic plan and aligned spending plan, attendees requested the following:
 - Gather input from school communities and students
 - Provide more details about the strategic plan and funding categories in spending plan
- Additionally, many attendees inquired about the following:
 - How will funds be allocated? (i.e., large amount of funding requires equity in its distribution and accountability in how it is spent)
 - How will APS know the plan is working or is successful?
 - How will APS continue to update and report out the development of these plans?

Background & Methodology

The APS leadership team contacted Strategic Analysis and Program Research (SAPR) in July 2021 to conduct a series of feedback and information sessions regarding the development of the strategic plan and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding alignment. SAPR was responsible for conducting the small group feedback sessions following the presentation of information by APS leadership in the form of both open town hall forums, and as part of regular stakeholder meetings (i.e., Yazzie Martinez Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, Kabila La Umoja Council for African Americans, Gifted Advisory Committee, Refugee Program Advisory Council, and Tribal Consultation). All meetings were held virtually. The target population for these information sessions was employees, families, business partners, and community members. The town hall forums will be the focus of this summary report. The outcomes and summary of the stakeholder committee meetings will be included in a separate report.

As the development and success of the strategic plan depend on the whole APS community, APS requested feedback from the public by hosting virtual town hall meetings through Zoom. The purpose of the feedback and information sessions was to seek input on the Albuquerque Public Schools strategic plan and the aligned ARPA spending plan. This was intended to be an inclusive process where all voices could be heard and help create a shared vision for APS. During the virtual town hall forums, the public had the chance to hear, review, comment, and submit questions regarding the strategic plan and federal funding alignment.

Many communication tools were used to invite the public to the “Town Hall Listening Tour.” On August 26, 2021, an email invitation was sent to more than 100,000 email addresses (including families, employees, and community members). Nearly 36,000 people opened the email, and 411 clicked on the link to register for the town hall. Similarly, the August 25, 2021 edition of “The Core,” which is the APS family and community newsletter, included information about the event and was sent to more than 100,000 email addresses. Other ways the event was advertised between August 27 and September 7, 2021, included: the “Perspective,” which is sent to 12,000 employees through email; a Peachjar digital flyer sent to 77,512 parents/guardians through email; a post on the APS homepage; Clear Channel billboards on four APS properties around the city, and through APS social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. The invitation is included in Appendix A.

APS hosted five town hall forums in late August and early September. Each of the five large group meetings moved into small break-out rooms to facilitate the collection of feedback. Across the five large meetings, a total of sixteen small break-out rooms were used to interact directly with the participants and provide adequate opportunity for everyone to share. On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, APS organized three meetings at 10am, 4pm, and 6:30pm. One week later, on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, APS organized two additional evening meetings at 4pm and 6:30pm. See Appendix B for the Town Hall Detailed Agenda. Each meeting was about 75-90 minutes in duration. It consisted of a 30-minute presentation by the district superintendent and chief financial officer. The presentation

was followed by a 45-minute question/feedback session with the attendees. During the break-out sessions, participants were asked four questions:

1. What brought you here today?
2. Which parts of the district plan caught your attention? Why?
3. How well do you think it addresses the needs of students?
4. Is there anything about this presentation you would like to share that hasn't already been discussed?

The average length of a break-out session was about 47 minutes (ranging from 38 to 52 minutes). In order to maximize the time for participant feedback, there was no opportunity to engage with APS leadership. Participant questions about the strategic plan or federal funding spending plan were recorded & compiled for leadership in order to develop a means of addressing participant questions through a "Frequently Asked Questions" published document.

Moderators/facilitators encouraged all attendees to participate in the discussion, ensured they stayed on topic, and summarized input in a nonjudgmental manner. Two note-takers were present in each break-out room. One note-taker shared their screen in Zoom and recorded attendees' input as it was shared. This allowed participants to see that their feedback was being accurately recorded. Participants had the opportunity to clarify their statement if it was not captured as intended. The second note-taker documented more detailed notes and observations. The meetings were video recorded and later transcribed. A qualitative analysis was based on the recorded notes and the transcription of the recordings.

Results

The following section presents the findings of the thematic analyses of the community responses to the four questions asked during the small group/break-out portion of the meetings.

The town hall forums had 131¹ attendees. Nine of the 131 actively participating attendees were APS employees or board members who were indeed only present to observe, typically because they were in some way directly involved in the decision making about the strategic plan or the aligned federal funding spending plan. Therefore, the analysis is based only on the 122 attendees who were not previously involved.

¹The town hall forums had an approximate total of 300 people sign into the five Zoom meetings. This includes project staff, APS leadership, and Board of Education members who were present only to observe or help facilitate the meetings. Of these, the note-takers accounted for approximately 214 attendees in the break-out rooms. These counts of attendees are approximate because of the nature of a virtual meeting. It is difficult to pinpoint precisely how many viewed the presentation and stayed to listen and observe. However, since the meetings were recorded and transcribed, we can be certain of the 131 active participants in the 16 breakout sessions.

Table 1. Number of break-out rooms at each Town Hall Forum and number of participants at each meeting and break-out room.

Town Hall Forum Date/Time and number of participants	Break-out Room and Number of Participants
August 31st - 10am Number of participants: 31	Room 1 = 8 Room 2 = 8 Room 3 = 7 Room 4 = 8
August 31st - 4pm Number of participants: 25	Room 1 = 3 Room 2 = 11 Room 3 = 6 Room 4 = 5
August 31st - 6:30pm Number of participants: 33	Room 1 = 12 Room 2 = 12 Room 3 = 9
September 7th - 4pm Number of participants: 8	Room 1 = 5 Room 2 = 3
September 7th - 6:30pm Number of participants: 25	Room 1 = 11 Room 2 = 8 Room 3 = 6

Participation by various members of the community was essential to this project. Town hall meetings were attended primarily by women (79.5 percent). Participants self-identified as the following:

- Parent: 50 participants
- APS employee – Teacher: 24 participants
- APS employee – non-Teacher: 29 participants
- Former APS employee: 6
- Community member: 20
- Not identified: 17

The above categories are not mutually exclusive (e.g., an attendee could be both a parent and a teacher).

Participants were asked four questions during the small group portion of the town hall forums. Each question had a suggested time limit (see Appendix B). The average response rate to the four questions was 62.7 percent. The transcribed comments of all participants were compiled by question, and a thematic analysis was completed. When necessary, notes from the small group sessions were used to clarify comments, and ensure each response and observation were accurately captured. All responses were coded based on the main idea expressed, thematic patterns were identified, and broad categories were created. Participant comments that illustrate these thematic categories are included throughout this report.

Question #1: What brought you here today?

The first question was intended to help familiarize attendees with the Zoom platform (practice taking turns, muting the microphone, using the reactions button to raise and lower hand, etc.). More importantly, it was meant to allow participants to introduce themselves and share with the group the reasons they are interested in providing input on the APS strategic plan and aligned ARPA spending plan. Table 2 outlines the response categories to the first question.

Table 2. Responses to Question #1: What brought you here today? (*Response rate: 77.9%*)

Reason for attending	Percentage of Respondents
Listen & Learn	66.7%
Sharing their input (general)	33.3%
Concerned about academic conditions (in general, special education, ELL, or unfinished learning)	22.9%
Concerned about behavioral health/Advocate for SEL	14.6%
Pandemic concerns	14.6%
Advocate for teachers, nurses, or community schools	11.5%
Equity concerns	8.3%
Concerned about conditions of school buildings	4.2%

Note: Ninety-five participants responded to Question #1. Participants may have shared more than one idea in their response, therefore percentages will not add up to 100 percent.

The majority of those who responded to Question 1 said they came to listen to the community and learn about the needs of APS and its plans for the future. Many respondents also commented that they were interested in voicing their input and ideas, but they did not elaborate during this question. Others were more specific with their concerns. For example, many mentioned they were concerned about the academic conditions at APS. Some mentioned the lack of rigor in general, some were concerned about special education program, and others were concerned about the unfinished learning that left some students unprepared for the current school year. Another concern that participants voiced during this first question was their concern about both students' and teachers' behavioral and mental health. Several said they attended the meeting in order to advocate for the social-emotional needs of the district's staff and students. A third concern that participants shared was general concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. Some commented on their concern about the safety of staff and students returning to in-person learning, some were concerned with the policies for handling COVID positive cases at their schools, and others gave general remarks about the difficulties of the past year and how to move forward under current conditions. Several participants attended to advocate for the need for more teachers (or more support for teachers), more nurses, or more community schools. A few participants voiced their concerns about equity issues in the district, and finally, a few shared concerns about the conditions of school facilities.

Comments from Question #1 (*quotes were edited for clarity*)

I'm here because I work closely with schools and the districts and teachers and families and just, you know, as a citizen of Albuquerque definitely always want to be engaged with education and interested to hear what APS has planned. – Community Member

I am a grandmother of two granddaughters in APS and listening in again, the spending of the APS money, as well as want to know, what is included in the equity training. So, with my granddaughters is very important to know what's going on in the schools. – Grandparent

So, I'm both an educator and a parent so I have a vested interest in APS and just in how we spend these funds. And my husband says that I'm always saying, "Well, they never asked me." So, I figure I'd better show up and actually have input. – Teacher & Parent

I would like to kind of mirror what the first person said I as well, work for the district. And I think one of the most important things is to see how we can improve academic achievement throughout the district. For all of our students. That is very very important - near and dear to my heart. For all students, absolutely. – APS District Employee

I am a parent of a student in APS and interested in how funds are going to be used to support the education as a student with disabilities. Also, at-risk students. As well as the entire community of learners. – Parent

Honestly, I'm here, just because I'm a devout public school supporter. I have my child in public schools and plan to all the way. I really love public schools and it's been really hard to watch the hit that public schools have taken through COVID. I know we took a big hit with the loss of enrollment last year and how that affected this year. I just really want to see how that money is going to be spent in ways that it's going to be invested in our schools. And I'm very interested in the behavioral health aspect of it as well. Because I think I'm a nurse and I care a lot about people's behavior health and emotional health, and I know that many people not just students, but in our society have taken a real hit emotionally this year. So just want to learn more about what investments are being made in that area.

– Parent & Community Member

I'm here to listen and learn about the breakdown of the budget, in the various areas, especially low-income families, and where the money is going to be on more of the equity and what that looks like. – Parent

I'm here because I'm an educator and I haven't had air conditioning since the start of school and I'm just concerned. I want to know what we're going to do with this money and encourage the district to fix the HVAC systems because I also know that in the winter, my room is going to be really cold. And I think we're not addressing our students' basic needs, and our basic needs because working conditions are learning conditions in education. I would implore that the district fix these basic needs, so that we don't have to continue - I don't want to say complaining - but so that we don't have to continue having these discussions and move on and actually focus on how we want to reshape education.

– Teacher

Question #2: Which parts of the district plan caught your attention? Why?

The second question was intended to gather first impressions of the plans presented to attendees during the first part of the meeting. Outlined in Table 3 are the parts of the plan that caught participants’ attention or which parts they would like to see prioritized. Although facility repairs/upgrades did not come up very much in the initial question, several of the participants mentioned it when responding to Question 2. Social-Emotional learning and the need to address the whole child were also discussed. Similarly, topics like behavioral health and wellness, accelerated learning/unfinished learning, and staff shortages were also mentioned. Further, some respondents mentioned what caught their attention was the lack of details or that the amount of funding was so large they hoped it was spent responsibly and creatively. Table 3 shows which parts of the plan stood out to participants; however, it does not inform if the portion of the plan stood out because they agreed or disagreed with how it was being addressed.

Table 3. Responses to Question #2: Which parts of the district plan caught your attention? Why? (Response rate: 62.3%)

Part of plan mentioned or wanted prioritized	Percentage of Respondents
Facility repair/upgrades (e.g., HVAC)	23.7%
SEL/Whole Child	18.4%
Behavioral health/wellness	18.4%
Vague - more detail is needed for input	17.1%
Accelerated learning/Unfinished Learning	17.1%
Addressing staff shortages (teachers, EAs, nurses, counselors, behavioral redirectors, bus drivers, custodians)	14.5%
Teacher retention/recruitment (teacher supports & incentives)	14.5%
Great deal of funding hope it is used responsibly/creatively	13.2%
Technology beyond devices	11.8%
Community involvement (including communication)	10.5%
Basic teacher/classroom supports	7.9%
Equity	6.6%
Special Education student support	5.3%
Summer learning opportunities/out-of-school	5.3%
Chronic absenteeism	3.9%
School safety (including COVID)	3.9%

Note: Seventy-six participants responded to Question #2. Participants may have shared more than one idea in their response, therefore percentages will not add up to 100 percent.

In an attempt to provide more information on the “why” piece of question 2, the responses were recoded to highlight more detail in the feedback from participants. Respondents’ comments were broken out into at least one of three categories: *because it was addressed*, *because it was somewhat addressed*, *because it was not addressed* in the strategic plan or aligned spending plan documents. See Table 4.

Table 4. Responses to Question #2 in terms of why areas caught their attention.

Addressed by Plans (Number of Respondents: 35)	Somewhat addressed by Plans (Reprioritize need) (Number of Respondents: 22)	Not addressed by Plans (Number of Respondents: 46)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics/accelerated academic growth/unfinished learning • Behavioral redirectors • Campus safety • Chronic absenteeism • College/career readiness • Community involvement pillar • Culturally relevant instruction • Differentiated, job-embedded learning for teachers • Equity and access for all students • Facility repairs/upgrades (HVAC) • Innovative ideas • Mental health services for teachers and students • Mentoring and coaching • Nursing services • Social-Emotional Learning • Special education prioritization • STEM • Summer learning opportunities • Supports for principals • Teacher PD and resources • Teacher retention/recruitment • Technology • Technology expansion for teachers • Tutors • Whole child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID safety & PPE • Equity • Facility repairs/upgrades (HVAC) • Health/Wellness • Improve teaching conditions • Jargon - needs more details • More teacher input • More teacher supports • Need for more Mental Health Services • Nursing services • Social-Emotional Learning • Special Education • Staff shortages • Student learning • Summer learning opportunities • Teacher retention/recruitment • Technology beyond devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability and next steps • Art education • Back to basics of learning • Better communication • Campus safety • Community engagement • Community schools • Diverse programs and career pathways • ‘Equity’ term used frequently in pillars but never clearly defined or clearly aligned in funding plan • Funding for community partnerships • How will it be sustained after the three years • How will special education be supported • How will teachers/staff at schools be supported • Inequities in district • Large amount of funding, want it used responsibly/equitably/creatively • More adults in classroom to handle unfinished learning & behavioral health • More details on how funds will be allocated • Out-of-school time programming • Parental engagement • Parental training in mental health • Public health consultant input needed • Teacher retention/recruitment (supports & incentives) • Reducing class size • Need for: teachers, EAs, nurses, counselors, behavioral redirectors, bus drivers, custodians • Technology & Virtual School Hub at all schools as a way to address chronic absenteeism • Update devices for teachers • Vague - needs more details

As seen in Table 4, respondents sometimes disagreed as to whether the plan addressed an area. For example, some respondents were pleased with how SEL was addressed in the plan, whereas others felt it could be prioritized more. Similarly, teacher retention/recruitment appears in all three categories meaning that respondents were in disagreement on how much the strategic plan and aligned ARPA spending plan address this area. It also shows that this area is a priority for attendees, and they would like to see it addressed by the district. Equity was another area that appears in all three categories. Some were pleased to see it included as a focus in the strategic plan, and others felt that it wasn't fully addressed in the strategic plan and even less in the aligned spending plan. Several of the topic areas included in the "not addressed" category were often related to trying to understand more about the details of the plan.

Comments from Question #2 (quotes were edited for clarity)

Something that caught my eye, that I liked to see under the unfinished learning was the goal of the accelerated academic growth. It specifically focuses on the support for the needs of the whole child to include the social-emotional learning, computer science, STEM, enrichment camps, the ethnic student enrichment camps that tied with the differentiated job-embedded learning for teachers. – APS Employee (Principal)

So, the two that caught my eye was upgrades to the HVAC system just because our school is pretty old and we got to step foot for the first time this year since we didn't get to go to campus last year and we noticed that it is pretty hot and muggy in the school. So, I was happy to see money allocated there. I was also happy to see money allocated for mental health services. I feel like our kids with that year they had home suffered significantly. But also, I was hoping for some training on parents. How do we notice issues with our children? I mean we can see behavioral issues but maybe some training for parents to show us how to spot some problem areas. – Parent

My daughter is in a low-income school in the International Zone and they haven't had air conditioners yet. I don't remember the exact amount of money, but I saw it was way down on the list. If you can't provide physical safety, the rooms are filthy, water systems don't work. If you can't provide the very basics to people, then it's hard to even try to accomplish any of these other things. So, my comment would be, I think that getting these schools, physically right should be way on top of the list. – Parent & Community Member

We have all the curriculum we need we've got all the tools. We have all the data. We have professional people that are outstanding in the educational field. What we need are more people to implement the tools and use the data that we have. I know there's a shortage I would be glad for more more more humans. And I think that if we address that we would also see an improvement in some of the social-emotional issues that we see. – Teacher

Question #3: How well do you think this plan addresses the needs of the students?

The next question asked how well attendees believed the plan addresses students' needs. Only a few respondents directly answered the question "how well" (see Table 5). Of those, about 19% thought the plan addresses students' needs very well or well. About 9% said the plan did not address students' needs well. Other participants commented that the plan was a good start, and many felt they didn't have enough information to respond. The majority of respondents who did not respond directly to this question voiced other concerns, like social-emotional/mental health services for staff and students or staff shortages. Many shared that the plan should have students' direct input or the school community's input because all schools and students have different needs.

Table 5. Responses to Question #3: How well do you think this plan addresses the needs of students? (Response rate: 61.5%)

Responses to Question #3	Percentage of Respondents
Very Well	10.7%
Well	8.0%
Not Well	9.3%
Good start	18.7%
Unknown - very broad/general & vague	37.3%
Needs students' direct input	9.3%
Needs school community input	14.7%
Other Concerns:	
• Social-Emotional/Mental Health Services	16.0%
• Staff shortages: administrators, counselors, nurses, teachers	14.7%
• Needs more student supports	14.7%
• Execution of plan/accountability/communication	14.7%
• Facility repairs/upgrades	8.0%
• Unfinished Learning pressures	8.0%
• Teacher supports (PD/training)	5.3%
• More options for out-of-school time programming	5.3%
• Equity – teaching/curriculum	4.0%
• Equity in funding	4.0%
• Special education – additional funding/concern of \$0	4.0%
• More accelerated learning	4.0%
• Outdoor classrooms – funding to support	2.7%
• Virtual School Hub rather than eAcademy	2.7%
• School safety	2.7%

Note: Seventy-five participants responded to Question #3. Participants may have shared more than one idea in their response, therefore percentages will not add up to 100 percent.

Comments from Question #3 *(quotes were edited for clarity)*

I do like the plan I do think it addresses the needs of the students. – Parent

I'm excited about what was presented in the slide deck. I know my daughter, who is in 1st grade, would benefit from a number of the ideas. Also, I acknowledge the district has the difficult task supporting students, teachers, and families during a pandemic. APS can't solve it all on their own. Money alone can't solve it. AND I'm confident APS and the extra money will address the needs of many of our students, teachers and other district employees.

– Parent

I guess I'd give it a 3 out of 10. We need more help with support for minorities like specifically. – Teacher

I understood everything they were saying about where the money was coming from - the different percentage that was going to be allocated where and different things like that, but it didn't seem like we really were given enough information to say, "Hey, this is a great plan!" or "No, it's not a great plan." It is sort of like open to interpretation on how the money is actually going to be used under that category. – APS Employee

Maybe I missed it. But did this plan articulate how they asked students what they needed. – Community Member

So, I'd like to say, thank you for everybody for putting a first draft in front of us. I think when you start talking about students and where this is going towards students, I think that's where this get becomes a really truly challenging thing to do. Because when I look down through each line on the budget that's been presented there are things that that meet student need. But I would like to see is the school communities understanding just how big this pot of money is and that they should be seeing some noticeable effect at every site from the fact that there is this money, it should not be like situation normal for students because they should be feeling the impact of this much money on top of the money that's already being spent in schools, which is considerable. – APS Employee (Principal)

Question #4: *Is there anything about this presentation you would like to share that hasn't already been discussed?*

The final question served to gather any last remarks participants wanted to share (see Table 6). The majority of the responses received in this last section were thoughts that were shared during previous answers. Many participants took time to reinforce ideas about mental health services, supporting needs of the whole child, the importance of staff retention/recruitment, the need for facility upgrades (e.g., HVAC), and the need for more adults in the schools. Other participants expanded on some ideas that were initially only briefly mentioned in other questions, like campus safety and the increase in student discipline issues. A few participants commented on the strategic plan and aligned spending plan process and accountability as APS moves forward with the next

steps. Finally, several participants wanted to thank APS for organizing the event and working to become more transparent in their work.

Table 6. Responses to Question #4: Is there anything about this presentation you would like to share that hasn't already been discussed? (Response rate: 49.2%)

Topic Area/Concerns	Percentage of Respondents
Thank you for hosting meeting/transparency is appreciated	25.0%
More adults on campus & in classroom	16.7%
Staff Retention/Recruitment	15.0%
More teacher support & resources	13.3%
Innovative/Creative ideas incorporated into the plan	11.7%
Working conditions (HVAC, breathing conditions, etc.)	11.7%
Information in the plans was too broad/lacked detail	10.0%
Supporting the needs of Whole Child	8.3%
Mental health support for staff	8.3%
Accountability as move forward with plan	6.7%
Community work together to improve APS	6.7%
Address academic needs (both accelerated & unfinished)	6.7%
Concerns about the impact of pandemic (over reliance on technology over quality instruction; continued disruption in learning)	6.7%
Campus safety/student behavior (increased issues)	5.0%
Outdoor learning – funding to support it	5.0%
Support to community non-profit partners	5.0%
Prioritizing STEM	5.0%
Reduce curriculum changes	5.0%
Equity in funding	5.0%

Note: Sixty participants responded to Question #4. Participants may have shared more than one idea in their response, therefore percentages will not add up to 100 percent.

Comments from Question #4 (quotes were edited for clarity)

I would argue that we could challenge our students more and we would make more more, more more, more headway if we had more people in the classroom. I can't say enough that there's just so much to do. So much that's put on your plate. It consumes your entire life, your weekends, your evenings. I'm not complaining. I know this comes with the job, but I think that we are getting to a point where perhaps our system is becoming ineffective and inefficient because we need more help. That's all there is to it. – Teacher

Elementary students are not eating in cafeterias right now. They are either eating in their classrooms or outdoors. Funding for more outdoor spaces (for eating and learning) would be great for COVID, but also for emotional well-being in general. – Unidentified Participant

I want to know how things are going to be different for students and teachers and families. I think one thing is that that we need to sort of reckon with is that the things that we have in place to meet student needs we've discovered have not been largely effective. And so maybe this is a time that we can reconsider some of those things. Or, you know, think outside the box, like one of the needs I know we have is that the schools in higher poverty areas are understaffed right now there are tens and you know hundreds of positions open at those schools. How are we going to encourage or I don't want to say lure teachers there but how are we going to get high-quality teachers at those sites? Can we spend some of that money to offer, you know, stipends for getting level three or national board-certified teachers in those schools. How is it going to be different? – APS Employee

So, when my daughter was a student here with APS Elementary level, they had the DARE program back in the day, early 2000s where police officers would go into the schools with police dogs, and they would educate children on drugs. The dangers of drugs and how to protect themselves. And I really think bringing a program such as that back to our children in elementary, middle school, high school. I mean, at every level would be so beneficial and of course, including the whole notion of violence and guns and schools and how it's okay to be an informant. It's okay. To help a child who might be considering hurting themselves or others getting them the help they need thinking in terms of being an informer. I guess would be the word for it. But how that's a positive thing for the community. – Teacher

Thank you for this opportunity. I appreciate the district creating space to engage with us! I need to get my son to bed. – Parent

Discussion

The common themes identified in the collected town hall responses provide valuable insights into the public's opinions of the strategic plan and the aligned ARPA federal spending plan.

In general, the APS community believed that the plans were on the right track. Most participants of the town hall forums were pleased with outlined pillars and goals described in the strategic plan and felt that the broad categories in the aligned ARPA spending plan would address much of the district's needs. The part(s) of the plan that focuses on unfinished learning initiatives seemed to offer promise in getting students back on track, and the training and supports for teachers would address some needs. Most participants were also pleased to see that social-emotional and mental health services were also prioritized in the strategic plan and aligned funding. Similarly, positive responses regarding facility upgrades that are necessary at many of the schools were also common. However, many believed the plans required more details, reprioritizing, or even the addition of areas that were overlooked.

Many commented that the plans were too broad and vague to offer any real information on what the line items would directly address for students, teachers, and schools. Additionally, they wished they


had more time to review the materials before the meetings to offer meaningful input. Many had some ideas of how the aligned spending plan could be reprioritized to meet the greatest needs. For example, many spoke about how the current need for social-emotional and mental health services may surpass the need for accelerated and unfinished learning. Some participants said that addressing unfinished learning adds to the trauma that teachers and students have already experienced due to the pandemic and remote learning. Additionally, some thought that to address the needs exacerbated by the pandemic, more adults were needed on campus and in the classrooms. Therefore, retention and recruitment of staff should be prioritized in the aligned spending plan. Further, many comments were made about the necessary upgrades needed to the HVAC systems. Although it is accounted for in the plan, many believed that the current conditions were unsafe and not conducive to learning or teaching. Similarly, several participants thought that addressing the needs of students with disabilities should be prioritized in the plan.

Finally, many commented on what they thought the plan overlooked or didn't fully address, for example, equity. A few commented that equity is mentioned in the strategic plan, but they didn't understand how it would be addressed. Further, they did not see where it aligned in the ARPA funding. Participants also mentioned more services and supports for refugee students, more consideration of how funding can assist community schools, and how funding can assist non-profit community partnerships as areas not adequately addressed in spending plan. Many also commented about the need for more input from students and school communities on how the strategic plan or the funding can benefit their unique needs.

The strategic plan and aligned spending plan were presented to the public in a brief format. The feedback from parents, employees and the community is that they would like to continue to be involved in the process as the strategic plan and aligned funding decisions are developed. They would like to understand more about how APS plans to allocate the funds, how they plan to ensure the plan is successful, and most importantly, how they plan to share this information back with the community. Many are hopeful that as the plans develop, APS will be innovative and creative while also not overlooking basic needs and supports, so the district has an opportunity to impact the lives of its students.

Participation by the various members of the APS community was essential to the development of the plans, and their willingness to be a part of the project and assist in the planning process is much appreciated. The information provided by the town hall participants offers insight into the needs of APS students, staff, and families. The comments and suggestions of the town hall participants provide instructive input that will help shape the strategic plan and its aligned ARPA spending plan to ensure what is best for the district and its community.

Appendix A: Town Hall Recruitment Advertisement



CHANGE INTO WHAT?

LISTENING TOUR

Plotting the Future for Albuquerque Public Schools

What do you get when you combine the enthusiasm of a new superintendent with the experiences of a global pandemic and the influx of federal stimulus dollars? You get an opportunity for change. But change into what?

You tell us.

Albuquerque Public Schools is launching a listening tour to get public input as we develop a results-oriented strategic plan that includes an outline for spending of COVID-related federal funds. You, as a member of our community, play a key role in creating this plan. We want to hear from you, and we will listen.

Our Plan

Let us hear your ideas, varying viewpoints, and suggestions. Keep in mind our Strategic Pillars as you consider your own ideas:

- Equity and access for all students and staff
- High-quality equity-driven instruction for every student
- Social and emotional learning
- Effective and efficient operations
- Staff and community engagement

Please consider joining us at one or more of the upcoming five virtual town hall meetings. We will stay in touch throughout the year, continuously updating you on our progress and seeking additional input.

Virtual Town Hall Meetings

- **Tuesday, August 31:** 10 a.m. | 4 p.m. | 6:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday, September 7:** 4 p.m. | 6:30 p.m.

Register for a Virtual Town Hall Meeting

You will be emailed the Zoom link to the Town Hall Meeting once you have registered.

We often hear people say APS should change. Help us decide change into what.

Appendix B: Town Hall Forum Agenda

Town Hall Meeting Detailed Agenda

- I. **Presentation on Strategic Plan & Federal Funding Alignment: (30 minutes)**
 - **Welcome** (APS Leadership)
 - **Overview** (APS Leadership)
 - Albuquerque Public Schools is pleased to announce the development of the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Our stakeholders are invited to participate in town hall sessions to provide input on the goals and activities that will be the district's focus for the next five years
 - As the development and success of the strategic plan depends on our whole community, we will be requesting feedback from our stakeholders by hosting town hall meetings
 - This is an inclusive process where all voices have the opportunity to be heard and help create a shared vision for APS
 - **Strategic Plan Process** (APS Leadership)
 - Following the May 17 Board of Education retreat, the cabinet sought input from internal and external stakeholders to create our vision and a theory of action to support each of the strategic pillars
 - The cabinet analyzed barriers and the root causes that prevent us from reaching our desired state
 - Using the analysis, we developed theories of action and measurable goals to present today
 - **Pillars: Reflecting Our Core Values and Beliefs**
 - Equity and Access for All Students and Staff
 - High Quality Equity Driven Instruction for Every Student
 - Social and Emotional Learning
 - Effective and Efficient Operations
 - Staff and Community Engagement
 - **Desired Future State:** Using current data and input from stakeholders, we identified what we hope to achieve within each of our pillars as a result of the strategic plan

- We further identified the forces that prevent growth and analyzed the root causes so that they can be removed
- As a result of this analysis, we developed theories of action and set goals to determine the direction of our work
- Summary of Our Goals
 - Albuquerque Public Schools will provide equitable access and opportunity in a safe and supportive environment that addresses the individual needs of students
 - Albuquerque Public Schools will align the work of schools and departments and create a system of high-quality accountability for instruction, social, emotional, and physical health and safety
 - Albuquerque Public Schools will create a clear direction for efficient and effective operations to better serve students and improve staff morale
 - Albuquerque Public Schools will improve all modes of communications to better inform and engage the Albuquerque community invested in public education
- **Federal Funding Overview (APS Leadership)**
 - First and Second Rounds of Stimulus Funding
 - ESSER I (Cares)
 - ESSER II (CRSSA)
 - Third Round of Funding – American Rescue Plan
 - ESSER III (ARPA)
 - Provides additional support to help schools recover from pandemic
 - \$122 billion nationwide; \$979 million to New Mexico; \$230 million to Albuquerque Public Schools
 - American Rescue Plan Requirements
- **Next Steps (APS Leadership)**
 - With our practitioners and stakeholders, we will continue to create initiatives to move us toward our goals. We will continue to get your input and feedback as we move forward

II. Break-out session (45 minutes) (Facilitator)

- *Introduce yourself and your assistants (note-takers).*
- *Remind participants that session will be recorded (facilitator will begin recording)*
- *Take time to go over ground rules:*
 - *Ask participants to find a quiet space for the duration of the discussion.*
 - *Participation is voluntary – it is all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.*

- *All responses are valid – there are no right or wrong answers.*
- *Please respect the opinions of others even if you disagree.*
- *Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the questions.*
- *Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.*

- 10 min Question 1:
 - What brought you here today?
- 15 min Question 2:
 - Which parts of the district plan caught your attention? Why?
- 15 min Question 3:
 - How well do you think this plan addresses the needs of students?
- 5 min Question 4: *(If time permits)*
 - Is there anything about this presentation you would like to share that hasn't already been discussed?

III. Closing & Wrap-up (5-15 minutes) (APS Leadership)

- Is there anything that really stood out that you think the whole group should hear?
- If you would like to submit questions or comments to APS, you can email them to strategicplan@aps.edu
- Do you have any final questions regarding the strategic plan or the aligned federal funding?

- Thank all for attending
- Look for communication about being a part of ongoing consultation groups
- Encourage them to invite friends and family to register for a town hall meeting
- Dismiss