



thoughtexchange - results and insights



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Introduction

In the fall of 2017, Shrewsbury Public Schools reached out to their community to start a conversation about areas where they are doing well, areas where they could improve, and how they could make school better for students. Participants shared their thoughts and rated the thoughts of others by placing stars next to the ideas that were most important to them. This report highlights participants' priorities and considers areas where the thoughts expressed could inform district decision-making.

The Thoughtexchange Process

Thoughtexchange provides software solutions that bring people together, build trust and make progress on important topics. People can confidentially and independently share their thoughts, appreciate other points of view and understand how their perspectives are connected to decisions.

A simple process ensures everyone is heard, everyone learns and important ideas emerge. The diagram on the right 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

Exchange Overview

Participation - District

 1,249
  2,750
  31,965

Participation - Students

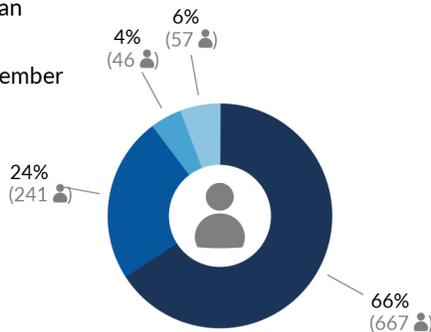
 3,324
  12,587
  127,620

Questions

- Q1
 What are some things you appreciate about our school and school district?
- Q2
 What are some things you think our school and school district should improve upon?
- Q3a
 What are the most important things our school and school district should focus on over the next five years to benefit our students? **(District only)**
- Q3b
 What are some specific things that could be done in future years to make school better for you and for other students? **(Students only)**

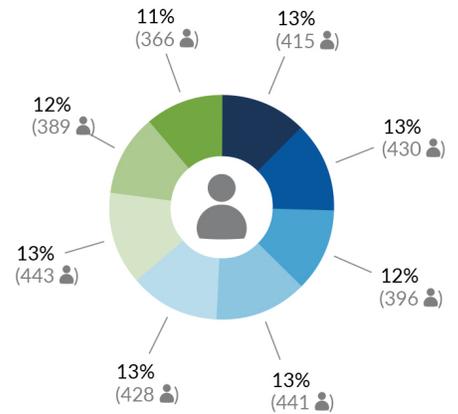
Demographics

66%  Parent/Guardian
 24%  Staff
 4%  Community Member
 6%  Other



District

13%  Grade 5
 13%  Grade 6
 12%  Grade 7
 13%  Grade 8
 13%  Grade 9
 13%  Grade 10
 12%  Grade 11
 11%  Grade 12



Students

Insights Overview

Thoughts shared by participants were grouped into themes and an analysis was conducted on the participants' starring patterns. The analysis, which highlights participants' priorities and areas of interest, is presented in the following sections:

- / Strategic Priorities
- / District and Student Comparison
- / Participant Suggestions



Strategic Priorities

This analysis explores the top themes across the exchange, paying particular attention to how they align with the strategic interests of the district. The relevant areas of alignment include:

1. **Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters:** Participants are primarily appreciative of this area. They are highly appreciative of teachers and staff. They would like to see small improvements in the availability of extracurricular activities.
2. **Connected Learning for a Complex World:** Overall, participants are appreciative of this area. They are highly appreciative of the quality of education. They would like students to be better connected to real-world learning to prepare them for careers.
3. **Space and Resources to Support Effective Learning:** Participants would like to see more improvements in this area. While they are appreciative of the training and collaboration of staff, they are concerned about overcrowding and class size.
4. **Enhanced Well-Being for All:** This is the smallest of the four areas. Participants appreciate the focus on social emotional learning. They would like students to have access to more mental health support.

Where relevant, the themes discussed below are aligned with these strategic priorities. The following analysis is presented in two sections:

- / District Process
- / Student Process

District Process

The conversations in the district process align with strategic priorities 1, 2 and 4. Participants expressed strong appreciation for the work of the teachers and staff, and appreciate the high quality of education. To further increase the quality of education, they would like to see improvements in college and career preparation, and changes made to reduce class sizes and address overcrowding. While participants appreciate the diversity of their school communities, they would like improvements in social emotional learning and student support.

Areas of Appreciation

District participants appreciate: **Quality of teachers and staff, Quality of education, and Multiculturalism and social inclusion.**

Quality of Teachers and Staff

★ Q1 - 22.5% of stars (largest theme)

- This theme fits under Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters.
- Participants appreciate the care, dedication and hard work of the teachers and staff.

Teachers are caring and knowledgeable.

It is important for the district to appreciate the staff and recognize the impact that they make.

4.8 ★ 17 👤

Quality of Education

★ Q1 - 12.5% of stars (2nd theme)

- This theme fits under Connected Learning for a Complex World.
- Participants expressed appreciation for the high quality of education and that the district is constantly striving to improve.

I appreciate the excellent education and opportunities my child has had here in Shrewsbury.

4.6 ★ 17 👤

Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion

★ Q1 - 9.4% of stars (3rd theme)

- This theme fits under Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters.
- Participants appreciate that students are part of a diverse community where they are exposed to different cultures.

I appreciate that our district values

diversity and differences. Our community is extremely diverse, not only in culture, but in gender and abilities.

4.5 ★ 20 👤



Areas of Opportunity

District participants expressed concern about: **Overcrowding**, **Class size**, **Real-world learning**, and **Health and wellness**.

Overcrowding

★ Q2 - 18.0% of stars (largest theme)

★ Q3 - 13.8% of stars (2nd theme)

- This theme fits under Space and Resources to Support Effective Learning.
- Participants are concerned that district schools are not large enough to accommodate the current and future student population.
- Participants discussed the town's growing population and expressed concern that the district is unable to accommodate more enrollment.

Space and overcrowding. A facilities plan for expansion and updating needs to be developed as part of the strategic plan.

4.5 ★ 27 👤

Class Size

★ Q2 - 11.5% of stars (2nd theme)

★ Q3 - 19.1% of stars (largest theme)

- This theme fits under Space and Resources to Support Effective Learning.
- Participants would like to have smaller class sizes. They are concerned that current class sizes do not allow teachers to provide enough student support.

Smaller class sizes. A better student-to-teacher ratio increases interactions between students and their teachers.

4.3 ★ 20 👤

Real-World Learning

★ Q2 - 5.1% of stars (3rd theme)

- This theme fits under Connected Learning for a Complex World.
- Participants would like more opportunities for students to explore career and college options. They suggested equipping students with resume and interview skills as well as offering internships, information on college entrance exams, and classes with experiential learning.

Expand the high school students' opportunities to intern at local businesses and non-profits. Show students the value of work experiences and the opportunity to explore career interests while in high school.

4.4 ★ 17 

Class Size

★ Q2 - 4.9% of stars (4th theme)

★ Q3 - 10.1% of stars (3rd theme)

- This theme fits under Connected Learning for a Complex World.
- Participants would like to see more support around social emotional learning to develop students' resilience.
- Some participants would like more supports in place to address the mental health needs of students.

Anxiety and depression are increasing for children. We need more school psychologists in the system. The teachers do a great job of working with all the students, but they are not trained psychologists. Some children are not getting what they need.

4.5 ★ 16 



Student Process

The conversations in the student process have also been aligned with the district’s strategic priorities.

- 1. Learning Environments Where Everyone’s Success Matters:** Overall, students are appreciative. They appreciate the extracurricular activities available to them and would like less of a focus on grades and testing.
- 2. Connected Learning for a Complex World:** Students would like to see more improvement in this area. They would like to have less homework, but appreciate the help and kindness of their teachers.
- 3. Space and Resources to Support Effective Learning:** Overall, students would like to see improvement in this area. They appreciate having access to iPads. They would like improvements to the HVAC system.
- 4. Enhanced Well-Being for All:** Students would like to see improvement in this area. While they do appreciate the current time they have for lunch and recess, they would like to have more of it.

Areas of Appreciation

Students expressed appreciation about: **Device per student, School culture, and Clubs and extracurricular activities.**

Device per Student

★ Q1 - 17.5% of stars (largest theme)

- This theme fits under Space and Resources to Support Effective Learning.
- Students appreciate that they each have an iPad. They expressed that it helps their learning by keeping them more organized, allowing them to work more efficiently and have their questions answered sooner.

One thing I appreciate is how our town or at least our school gives out iPads. This helps us study in many ways. For example, apps such as Notability help us write notes and do different assignments in PDF form.

4.5 ★ 66 👤

School Culture

★ Q1 - 13.9% of stars (2nd theme)

- This theme fits under Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters.
- Students appreciate how the school is a welcoming community where they can make friends and be treated respectfully.

Something I like about the Shrewsbury district is it's a friendly and welcoming community. That's important because it makes you feel more like a family than just a community.

4.6 ★ 65 👤

Clubs and Extracurricular Activities

★ Q1 - 13.6% of stars (3rd theme)

- This theme fits under Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters.
- Students enjoy the large variety of clubs and extracurricular activities that are offered. They expressed that these help them get involved and that there is something for everyone.

I appreciate the different extracurricular activities that Shrewsbury High School offers. Because different students are into different things which makes it a good thing.

4.5 ★ 42 👤



Areas of Opportunity

Students expressed concerns around: **Homework** and **Lunch and recess**.

Homework

★ Q2 - 23.3% of stars (largest theme)

★ Q3 - 22.0% of stars (largest theme)

- This theme fits under Connected Learning for a Complex World.
- Students would like to have less homework to allow more time to rest and do extracurricular activities. They would also prefer no homework over weekends and holidays.

The school could improve on regulating the amount of homework students receive. This is because students must come to school early and need sleep. This is important as students need a sufficient amount of sleep in order to perform at the highest rate, boosting the educational values of the school.

4.5 ★ 158 👤

Lunch and Recess

★ Q2 - 14.5% of stars (2nd theme)

★ Q3 - 11.4% of stars (2nd theme)

- This theme fits under Enhanced Well-Being of All.
- Students would like to have a longer lunch and recess so that they can finish their food and have time to exercise.

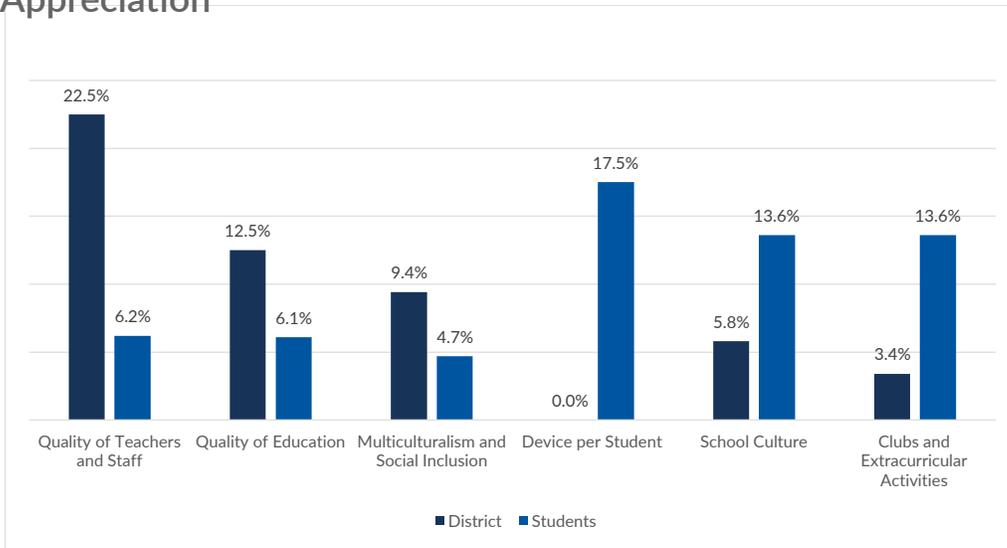
The recess time should be longer, same with lunch - 30 minutes each. So we get all of energy out.

4.8 ★ 24 👤

District and Student Comparison

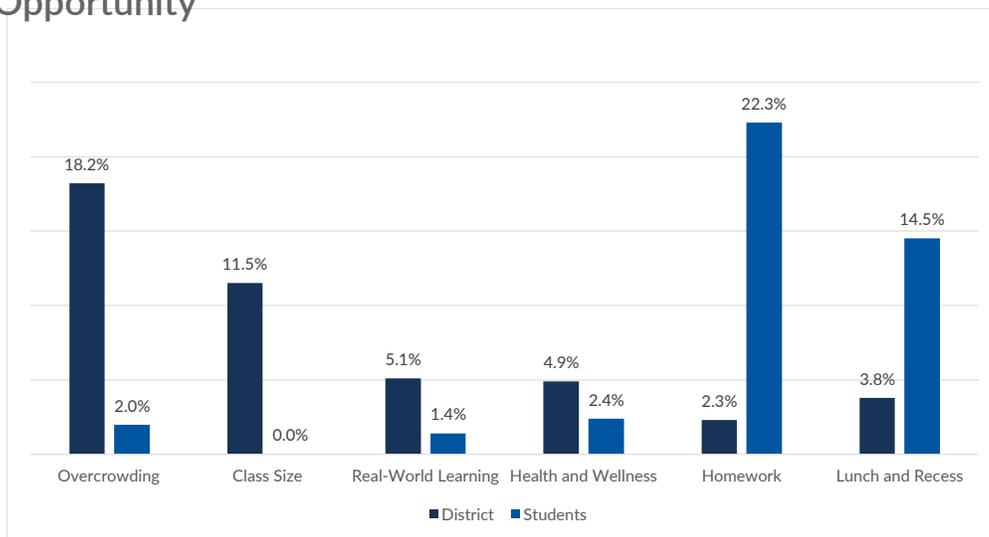
The following charts compare the differences in the conversations between the District and Student exchanges.

Areas of Appreciation



- Although the conversation sizes differed, the content of the conversations was similar.
- Of note, the theme **Device per student** was not present in the District exchange, but was the top theme under appreciations in the Student exchange.

Areas of Opportunity



- Students did not discuss **Class size**.
- While the district conversation around **Health and wellness** focused on overarching approaches to health and wellness, the student conversation highlighted the stress and pressure they are coping with at school.

Participant Suggestions

This section highlights areas of opportunity for the district to engage with participants, and address the priorities and concerns shared across both exchanges. The suggestions are arranged around the four broad focus areas: **21st century skills**, **Health, wellness and stress relief**, **Inclusionary practices/schools**, and **Facilities**.

21st Century Skills

- Continue to make iPads available 1:1 to students.
- Support students to develop skills such as resilience, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- Integrate team and project-based learning opportunities into the curriculum.
- Have students work collaboratively to develop problem-solving skills.
- Provide learning opportunities that are applicable to real-world problems.

Health, Wellness and Stress Relief

- Hire more school psychologists.
- Continue to teach mindfulness, meditation and yoga.
- Educate students on mental health and the warning signs of mental illness.
- Train staff on trauma-informed classroom strategies.
- Have a longer lunch and offer peer support during that time.
- Provide students with skills to manage their emotional well-being.
- Provide more time outdoors for all students.
- Have a later start time to allow teenagers to get more sleep.
- Give students less homework to allow time for extracurricular activities and sleep.
- Restrict the amount of homework assigned over weekends and breaks.

Inclusionary Practices/Schools

- Continue to integrate differentiated and individualized learning based on ability.
- Continue to strengthen connections and understanding between students.
- Students would like the opportunity to anonymously give feedback about teachers.

Facilities

- Install larger lockers.
- Replace missing bathroom doors for privacy.
- Upgrade playgrounds and equipment.
- Provide air conditioning and improve the HVAC system.

| Learn More

Full results for Shrewsbury Public Schools can be found here:

Results Website: [shrewsburyma.thoughtexchange.com](https://shrewsbury.ma.thoughtexchange.com)

Dashboard: <https://davserver.thoughtexchange.ca/shrewsbury2017-2f4633e/>

Username: shrewsbury

Password: pause-warbler-lock