

UPPER DARBY RISING

FIRST COMMUNITY-WIDE FORM

FEBRUARY 20, 2021

OVERVIEW

This initial event in a series of three community-wide forums continued the foundational civic engagement phase of the Upper Darby Rising initiative.

A total of 80 community members participated, along with 13 district observers and the members of the Catalyst Community Conversations (CCC) team.

The event began with a welcome video put together by the school district, featuring Central Office and school board leaders explaining the goals of Upper Darby Rising.

Then, the Catalyst Community Conversations team reviewed the steps that had taken place leading up to the night's forum. They then reviewed the [four themes](#) that have emerged as the core topics of Upper Darby Rising and prepared the group for the coming breakout groups by reviewing the ground rules for the dialogue.

During this time, participants were posting into the chat their answers to two prompts:

- *Tell us why you decided to come tonight?*
- *Quickly, what word or phrase sums up for you the Upper Darby School District?*

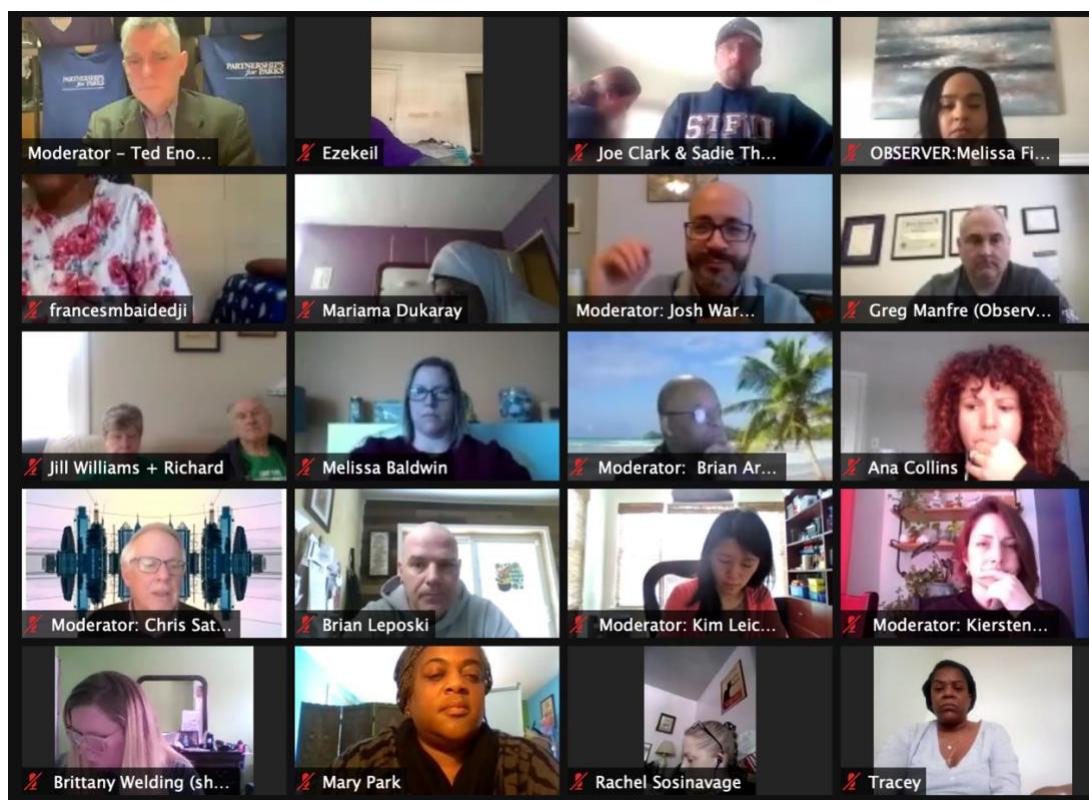
The responses were numerous, revealing and mostly positive. They are summarized at the bottom of the report.

At the end of the opening plenary, the participants and observers were divided into 13 breakout groups, each led by an experienced moderator provided by CCC.

The moderators led breakout groups through a structured discussion of the four themes, using stories and quotes garnered from an earlier round of interviews and focus groups to prompt discussion. [The stories and quotes are in the PowerPoint presentations we shared in the plenary session and the small groups, which can be found here.](#) Each group tried to come up with a set of specific action steps to address each theme, while also suggesting some overall guiding principles for the Upper Darby Rising action plan.

Each moderator filed a detailed written report on the breakout. These are provided below.

The evening concluded with a plenary discussion of insights and findings from the breakouts, with some participants posting their key takeaway in the chat. Those posts are also included at the bottom of this report.



BREAKOUT GROUP REPORTS

The reports are presented by alphabetical order of the moderator's last name. If you want to jump to a particular group's report, please use these links:

- [GROUP 1: BRIAN ARMSTEAD](#)
- [GROUP 2: MARISA DENKER](#)
- [GROUP 3: TED ENOCH](#)
- [GROUP 4: CASSANDRA GEORGES](#)
- [GROUP 5: SHARI GILMORE](#)
- [GROUP 6: LAUREN HIRSHON](#)
- [GROUP 7: GERMAINE INGRAM](#)
- [GROUP 8: SERRANO LEGRAND](#)
- [GROUP 9: KIM LEICHTNER](#)
- [GROUP 10: KIERSTEN MAILLER](#)
- [GROUP 11: CHRIS SATULLO](#)
- [GROUP 12: HARRIS SOKOLOFF](#)
- [GROUP 13: JOSH WARNER](#)

GROUP 1

MODERATOR: BRIAN ARMSTEAD

This was an extremely diverse group with one white female, one white male, an African-American woman, and two immigrants (East Indian man and Ethiopian woman). They were initially a little reluctant to speak but they warmed up quickly. Although a few participants were more verbal than the others, everybody offered insightful comments and everyone seemed to value each other's contributions.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

There was a lot of energy around the themes involving the 2nd story about the immigrant parent whose children get into some incidents due to cultural differences and misunderstandings.

The group seemed to agree that the problems were mainly due to a lack of understanding of different cultures. The staff and students need to better understand the incoming students. And the incoming students need to be taught about the culture they are merging into.

In the first story, teachers ultimately discovered the underlying learning and emotional issues that were driving poor behavior in a couple of students. One of the participants noted that teachers try to do that but she has seen some kids "go off" on teachers when the teacher was trying to help them. So, it's not always that easy to help the kids. Another participant noted that a number of the behavioral difficulties could be due to issues at home. That parent suggested talking to the parents to try to work together to find a solution. Another participant said they need to get to the root of the problem.

Regarding the third story where the African-American kids were handcuffed when they were trying to find out where to go during a school lockdown drill; one participant noted that she didn't know why the Assistant Principal got angry but it shouldn't matter. "These kids just want to be talked to as normal kids." That participant continued, "When they come to school they are supposed to feel safe."

Another participant (a white male) noted that he had not witnessed anything like story #3. But he was not entirely surprised. He relayed an experience he had while living near a military base in North Carolina. New personnel often look for "good schools" and he realized that those were schools that didn't have high African-American populations. That realization was shocking to him but has noticed the same pattern repeat itself.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Teachers should speak with parents to see if they can work together to solve students' behavioral and learning issues. They should try to get to the root of the problem and not just assume bad behavior can be solved by punishment.
- New immigrant students should stay in a separate class so that they can integrate slowly with the main school population. During that time they can learn/be taught things to help them adjust better
- The general student body should be taught about other cultures so they don't misinterpret behaviors from new immigrant students. Also, so they don't make fun of immigrant students' behaviors, style of clothing and cultures.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Most of the participants in my group had children that were in their first or second years in the district. They, therefore, said they had not witnessed any resource imbalances directly.

One parent's oldest daughter attends Drexel Hill but did have friends that went to Beverly Hills and she told her mom how cold it is there.

Regarding the Camp Speers story, everyone agreed that kids at both schools should have those kinds of opportunities and that something is wrong if they are not available to one group of kids.

The mother with the child at Drexel Hill said she'd be heartbroken if it were her child that couldn't have those opportunities while others could. She said she was not aware that the resources were so limited at Beverly Hills. She thinks many of her fellow parents at Drexel Hill don't realize that either.

One parent said the parents at Beverly Hills should do more fundraising but there should also be a backup plan to help with fundraising.

Regarding fundraising, one parent said the cost is too high for many of the usual fundraisers that the schools do. "Even the candles start at \$10."

He went on to suggest that they should come up with other less expensive items. Maybe even some that cost \$1. "Something everyone can afford."

The group suggested the district wide parent association and the district administration could help organize fundraisers to help support kids at the under-resourced schools.

They also suggested contacting places like Camp Speers and asking if they can be flexible on cost when kids are coming from Beverly Hills, etc.

On the overall issue of resources and school crowding etc., one parent said they need a third middle school.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

To help parents know about the imbalances between schools:

- Take parents on trips to see the other schools in the district.

Fundraising to go into a fund for across the entire district. Ideas included:

- Have fundraisers that offer some items that everyone can afford. Even as little as \$1.
- Get money from alumni
- Hold alumni-student football games; charge \$2 admission and sell food.
- Cowpie bingo
- Dances for kids at the schools.
- Car washes at the middle schools

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The participants all agreed that diversity is good: “You have to get used to living around different people.”

One parent said diversity is “hard to understand but we make it work.”

Some of the drawbacks/challenges of diversity are

- Communication
- Understanding other people and their backgrounds
- Respecting others even when you don’t understand their culture
- We can’t expect teachers to understand everyone.
- Teachers need patience and not yelling at their kids (from other cultures)
- it’s not just Black boys. The teachers might not know a lot about other culture because they haven’t been exposed to them.

There was a lot of discussion about the role teachers play in these situations.

Most importantly, the group wanted to reinforce that “there are a lot of phenomenal teachers ... they do care .”

Additionally, the group said that everybody has different temperaments so we can’t just talk about teachers’ challenges with a broad brush.

However, the group commented that teachers need to remember that many parents don’t speak English fluently. Sometimes teachers get loud. One parent said: “They can’t be yelling at everybody.”

The group agreed that teachers should listen to parents calmly. They need to make the parents feel good instead of making them feel like they are not a part of the community.

The group said language can often cause a clash. They suggested having translators available.

One parent also told a story about her step-dad. Her step-dad is an immigrant and he realized that many people take immigrant behaviors as a sign of aggression even when it is not intended to be so. Therefore, he intentionally smiles a lot to communicate that he is not being hostile or aggressive. This suggests some of the guidance could be for immigrant students and parents to learn strategies on how to interact with people in this culture to communicate what they (the parent/student) really wants to communicate.

Another parent summed up their thoughts “To make it work, try to understand their background; learn about the person and their background and they do the same for me; you respect them and they respect you.”

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- As per the story about one of the participants’ step-dad (above): Teach immigrant parents and students how people in this society interpret some of their behaviors and help them think about new strategies to communicate clearly. For example, what cues lead the main society to interpret some of the parents as “hostile” and how can that be adjusted.
- Teach the main student body and staff about other cultures so their behaviors aren’t misinterpreted.
- Teach staff and students how to respect people even when you don’t know their culture (because there are too many cultures to know each one fully).
- Train teachers/staff how to maintain their calm; how to get to know people that seem different than you; and how to listen to them and appreciate and respect them.
- Teach new and current students how to always be yourself and not want to be like others.
- Help parents and students learn English
- Have interpreters available
- Regarding the treatment of Black boys, include Black culture as one of the cultures the teachers need to learn. So as not to stigmatize the Black students/culture. And also so the teachers don’t put up unintentional roadblocks at the thought of dealing with this “Black” issue again.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The group agrees that they receive a lot of information from the school district. They want to be engaged and they really appreciate the information that they do receive.

Several thought it might be too much information but they weren't sure what the district could do about that.

One parent observed "Sometimes it seems like too much; other times it's perfect. For example, the phone calls for snow days paired with emails were great."

They also said there is already a distinction between what the school sends and what the district sends and that helps a lot.

One parent suggested it might help if the district could figure out a way to know that the parents are actively receiving and processing the information the district sends out. She said "they (the district) use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, emails, etc. But do the parents read it?"

Developing a feedback system could help the district figure out ways to be more efficient and effective with less information overload.

There was also a separate comment from one parent that wanted the District to provide more information to parents to help them explain/reinforce the need for social isolation to their younger children (K-2nd grade).

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Develop a feedback system to tell whether parents are reading the messages the district sends out on different channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, emails, etc. This could help the district figure out ways to be more efficient and effective with less information overload.
- Provide more information to parents to help them explain/reinforce the need for social isolation to their younger children (K-2nd grade). (maybe fun videos, etc.)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

The two major themes in this group were about:

- 1) The need to teach everyone how to understand and respect each other's cultures
- 2) The need to do additional, creative fundraising to give opportunities to all of the students across the district, even if they are in less resourced schools.

PRINCIPLES OR RULES OF THUMB TO GUIDE THE DISTRICT:

- Teaching everyone to appreciate differences

- Teaching everyone how to respect others
- Being creative in fundraising
 - Different types of activities
 - Fundraisers that involve people from across the district to support those that have a hard time raising funds on their own.
 - Fundraisers that give people from all economic levels a chance to participate.

GROUP 2

MODERATOR: MARISA DENKER

This group was great – all very respectful of each other and took equal / fair times speaking. A lot of consensus in this group, consistent nodding along to each other's points, all very open to the work being done – and encouraging of it. Seemed very eager to get more involved and help.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Story 1 is best story of the three provided; parent was able to assess kids were a handful, showed recognition.
- Good teacher employed who was able to recognize too and invested enough.
- Came to a solution.
- Excited about switching over to public schools because these resources are available that you can't get in same way at private or smaller school
- Other stories don't see a resolution while story 1 shows dialogue, understanding, issue, clearly an effort made
- Story 3 ends with nobody wins – doesn't seem like resolution; doesn't seem to show grace or attentiveness coming through.
- I don't hear as many issues at elementary school
- A white woman observed: I have the most experience with issue 1; things get triaged at a much higher level related to racial parents; heavy guns come out then.
- That is the thing we want to have changed; want all the kids in our schools to be seen as children
- Black woman also notices that same difference with how situations are handled; basic understanding there's an issue but different levels of resolution / response.

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One participant/observer called Story 1 a microcosm of what's happening forever in UDSD: His two sons graduates now but were in UDSD – Once, two

kids were arguing in hallway and his son walking by, and all 3 were made go to the office. Father was called at work; once they saw it was him (a school director) it was resolved immediately. It would've been handled differently if were not his son.

Different woman – feels like opposite experience, younger son, white, troublemaker – given benefit of doubt so many times, knew older son was a role model, husband and I were begging them to do more consequences but they also knew him, white family – get benefit of almost too much grace.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Need to understand that students come from different cultures / way needed to work with that better / different cultural norms – needs to be learnings from that & have action plans for how to help that with that.
- Example of Story 2 – opportunity for growth – opportunities for parents to share where they come from, what's norm there, and opportunity for students to learn the differences – not make it that how we do it here is the standard – kids can feel more a part of their class if not being constantly othered for cultural differences.
- Open dialogue.
- Learning beyond the classroom level – maybe opportunity at district level for teachers to share success stories / successful processes.
- Orientation for new students – orientation class for new kids coming in.
- Related to story 3 – that can't happen – second/ pause to resolve, dialogue, not get cops involved right away – more training on the side of the assistant principal and cops to understand the situation here.
- Shouldn't think that one culture is the standard. For immigrants, what are our cultural norms and how do we describe them, so people can say understand and respect the difference, not just think of 'our' norm as the standard?
- Set a disciplinary approach more restorative than punitive.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Lot of feeling that schools in wealthier areas of the District are having less ability to do things because kids in lower wealth areas can't afford to do it. You can feel antagonism there, feeling that their kids are missing out because other kids can't get afford the activities. Among wealthier people, there's anger there and not a focus on solutions for other kids.

One woman responded to this: Can't wealthier kids just do those extra actions outside of school

Both of these issues feel bigger than the district – related to how public schools are funded.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED

- Parents need to advocate with lawmakers for change on how schools are funded; there should be no reason for difference in funding
- District-level solutions – why can't both middle schools have a special event? Why is Beverly Hills so different than Drexel Hill? Some sort of blanket middle school funding; funding is split between the two schools. Funding should be at a DISTRICT level not on a school-only level
- Thinking of the HSA's – are there any guidelines on fund-raising and how it can be spent? Is there a cap? We should be able to branch out more with HSA in our schools if we want to fund something for our kids.
- Instead of individual schools promoting their fund-raisers internally, while not promote every school's fund raiser district wide. That way the entire district can come together supporting the entire district. Same with events; go to events at other schools to support them.
- Let more people know there is a district HAS? Show them the power of what community can do.
- It's easier to get parents involved at the elementary school level. Need to rethink engagement at middle school or high school
- Need to invite and show you appreciate the value of "sweat equity." It's hard to get involved if that seems to mean giving money that you really don't have to give.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Truly resonate with first quote provided. There's such a mix of students but not similar diversity amongst teachers. Would be a strength to the district to have teachers and administration who are diverse.
- "I almost cried when I saw a black guy was hired to run Hillcrest. I felt myself unexpectedly invested in that decision. It really does impact how I interact with administration."
- "I think what happened is the district became diverse before district/admin has. The district had a long history of schools and administration hiring people who were familiar, like them, white people hiring white people."
- "It needs to be a conscious effort, but people won't come to teach if they don't feel that they will be supported. The story told about Upper Darby has to change,"

- “Wouldn’t it be great as a white teacher if you had other teachers in building that were from different cultures and race, where you could go to them for support in learning other perspectives. Colleagues could add to each other’s cultural sensitivity.”
- How are we competing with other districts to get more diverse teachers?
- “It’s about the difference between walking the walk and talking the talk; you have to do the hard work of putting the work in.”

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Diversity in hiring – can share advice, perspectives etc.
- Robust diversity training (as short-term step) with more promotion of it.
- Level of work – needs to have awareness – show how going all in.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

It’s one thing to have a Diversity Assembly, but different to see things change over time in regular, everyday interactions, where making people’s voices heard, opportunities that work for them – really meet people where they are I.e. parents who don’t feel as comfortable because English not first language, work during day, etc.

- All groups need to be given equal footing having their input sought and valued. Kids notice that, that their parents’ voices are respected.
- Integrated into culture of how district operates
- It’s OK if you can’t always do what some people want done. People just want to know their voices were heard. It’s okay to explain why an idea can’t work or won’t work know, but people want to know their point of view has been acknowledged and taken into account. Otherwise, they’re going to disengage.

GROUP 3

MODERATOR: TED ENOCH

The group conducted a thoughtful and serious conversation. The participants were all highly invested in the school and community; many personally work to contribute and improve things. Some felt isolated in this endeavor and others were highly mindful of some of the challenges and barriers towards improvements.

The group members were all highly attentive to one another, even during challenging conversations such as frank comments on the difficulty of building community with such highly diverse cultural enclaves. The group members were open-eyed to the challenges, yet personally invested in recognizing district assets and best practices. All sought to find new tools and connections by which to make things better.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- There is definitely a bullying problem. Some of it has to do with color and culture.
- Issues arise on the bus, including some higher-profile incidents that the news covered in the no- too-distant past.
- We have overcrowding in some schools, and that contributes to problems. That can be a pressure cooker for our students.
- Upper Darby is a model. Our teachers do teach and support and care about our children.
students.
- Our police do get solid training to try and help keep things de-escalated. We have learned from past mistakes with overzealous police responses.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Mentoring can help in many ways, but especially with individuals and cultural isolation.
- Continue anti-bias training with police, and all of our staff.
- Can we create police programs with our youth to build relationships, in the way we encourage relations with our fire department?
- We can communicate better when there are incidents to fight misinformation and rumors. Facts and information are important for our parents and students. This will help folks from making faulty assumptions about district's discipline practices and over-reacting to student incidents.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- The school trips to PEAK or Camp Speers ... Why can't all the schools get these opportunities?
- And what about other best practices? Some schools have students reading morning announcements. I'd love for that to happen in our school.
 - Are the schools with predominantly Black and brown students getting the perks like video announcements by students in the morning?
 - Schools can share fundraising practices with each other as well.
- We do have some older buildings that really need lots of investment. It is a burden.
- We have a real inequity problem between the two middle schools.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Can we make the extra-curricular opportunities part of the curriculum to help ensure all students get the same opportunities? This would make family and community resource differences less impactful on student experience.
- We do need to communicate clearly what is a curricular resource and expense, and what is extra-curricular. It will make a difference.
- Can the various home & school associations have exchanges and learning opportunities with each other? Could one school share resources with another?
- All schools could raise money, put it into a pot, then share the proceeds equally.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Too many of our teachers are white women. We can do a better job of hiring a more diverse staff that better reflects the diversity of our students.
 - Professional development would promote quality teaching for all.
 - It's not as simple as just hiring teachers of color ...
 - Fewer Black people are going into the teaching trade than in previous generations.
 - A good teacher is a good teacher. It doesn't matter what color they are.
- UD does a good job with diversity and cultures. Our principals do a good job with cultural awareness. We could applaud our teachers and administration.
- We do appreciate our diverse school at Highland Park, but our home &

school association is mostly a bunch of white women, and we likely won't connect with all of the communities that we serve.

- In some cases, it feels like people of color don't want to sell homes to white people.
- Some families are telling their kids not to play with kids who are a different color.
 - My kid was chased from a party simply because he was white.
- We have to bridge these gaps in culture somehow in our district.
- We have a disconnect between the city people and the suburb people.
- Thurman Field has some white folks who don't like seeing Black kids playing basketball on the courts.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Diversify teaching staff, but continue training with staff, and community, like police police anti-bias training.
- We need more community building activity like little kids' sports leagues. It's important.
- Older kids could visit elementary schools and provide tutoring and mentoring, building relationships, strengthening learning, creating bridges.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- On our east side of the township, we don't have a lot of involvement. Just little pockets of people. It feels like things are disconnected.
- Many folks don't have social media. We need old school flyers. It makes a difference.
- Conversation series like this are hard to do, but it is a really good thing that we are doing it.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

The baseball and softball team last year created a little league for Drexel Hill and Llanerch Hills at Stonehurst Elementary. It was a good thing. We need more things like that.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

- Sharing resources and best practices. How can our community contribute to all of our schools and students? And how can we promote best practice sharing across schools?

- With so much cultural change and demographic shifts, we end up having pockets of isolation or disconnection. Creating relationships and connections between family and the community is critical. Things like sports leagues can have a big impact on this.

GROUP 4

MODERATOR: CASSANDRA GEORGES

The group was predominantly made of parents who were first-time UDR attendees.

There was limited discussion. It took time for people to comment on the stories. There were a couple of times when someone else would turn on their camera just long enough to make a quick comment before returning to being silent and off-camera. There was essentially one attendee who consistently responded to the prompts. There were more moments of quiet than there were of comments throughout the event.

I think part of the problem was expectations. Some attendees said that they were there to learn. That might explain why they remained silent. Maybe they came to the event expecting to listen to a bunch of speakers talk about what was happening with the school district. Maybe there were challenges involving language. Maybe the problem was it being Saturday morning. I can't say for sure, but it was different from the other UDR forums I've been part of.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Individual vs team approach to make a difference in student's life: It takes a team of people working together to help students learn. However, one person/a good teacher can begin the change in direction by giving student the help and undivided attention.

Cultural adjustments: Group agreed that it was important for the school to understand how student was brought up, in terms of cultural practices/norms. Group noted that there were unique challenges as immigrant parents transitioning from their African ways of doing things, e.g. needing time to adjust, helping kids who might be teased for their accent, and working on interacting with others.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Have more teachers that understand different cultural norms.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Feeling left out: Kids will feel bad if they can't participate in something that the other students are doing.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Fix what is broken in old buildings, e.g. heating system from story. Renovate.
Contact politicians about fair funding. Register for PA School Works.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Connection between student and teacher - Teacher should get to know student and value student's opinions.

Role of school as second home and source of lasting friendships: There is value in kids growing up with people of different backgrounds.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Host more diversity and inclusion activities that would promote acceptance of one another, like potluck dinners.

Try to instill in students the importance of treating people the same, so it can stay with them for the rest of their lives.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Hub is possible by holding open forums/more events.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

Improve connection with people. Promote acceptance.

Fair funding to pay for tools and meet needs.

GROUP 5

MODERATOR: SHARI GILMORE

The group was very open to discussing the themes presented. Unfortunately, it was not a large group, and most were not talkative (and only one person turned their

camera on). Fortunately (and perhaps a saving grace), one person was very talkative and kept the conversation going. She was mindful of being very expressive and waited at times for others to speak up before she shared her thoughts. Her comments made others chime in and add on to what was being discussed.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

After sharing the stories from Theme 1, most of the participants agreed that those stories were not new. The narrative of schools not going above and beyond to meet the students where they are was old news. In particular, there was a lot of emphasis on the school district and teachers not equipping themselves with the trainings necessary to understand what the students' unique needs are. If they took the time to better understand the challenges incurred, especially by students of color, their mediations would look and feel different i.e. more empathetic and culturally sensitive. Most participants also agreed that having diverse staff was not enough. The school district needed to implement accountability across the board to ensure teachers understand diversity and are practicing inclusion.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Diversity and Inclusion trainings
 - The UDSD needs to ensure its teachers are reflecting the communities inside of the classroom. This was discussed in terms of both makeup of staff and cultural competence.
 - UDSD to hold teachers accountable for demonstrating diversity and inclusion practices.
 - UDSD to create an environment of knowledge sharing among teachers and enforcing a culture where they hold each other accountable.
 - To be competitive and attract the right talent, the school district needs to increase teachers' salaries. One parent was a teacher, and she said it was a shame that she lived in Upper Darby but couldn't afford (literally) to teach in Upper Darby.
 - In addition to race, age and gender (binaries) were brought up as important factors to include in building a diverse staff of teachers.
 - One parent said: "Students need teachers who look like them."
 - Another said: "Diversity doesn't always mean inclusion."
- Personal Accountability
 - Teachers are to practice personal accountability. Education and trainings should not fall solely on the school district. The example was shared that some teachers had signs in the classrooms that read: We Support Our Police. This was particularly triggering last year during the death of George Floyd and the global Black Lives Matter protests.

Teachers need to be aware of what's affecting their students and their students' communities, and take an unbiased, sensitive approach to ensuring they feel safe and untargeted in their school environment.

- Expand the Curriculum
 - Many of the participants feel the curriculum is not diverse and would be more than willing to participate in sharing their family and community's narratives. For example, one parent said she would be more than happy to go to her child's school for Black History Month and share untold stories of Black inventors and important Black figures throughout history.
 - To expand on the above, there was a consensus that the curriculum covered the same handful of Black figures in history (i.e. MLK, Rose Parks) and needed to broaden its scope. The parents in my group said the school district should present more opportunities and invitations for dialogue and for parents to become involved in teaching history.
 - There was concern that current events are not discussed in the classroom, and the parents felt this was setting the students up for failure. They also felt if teachers were more up-to-date on current events, and teaching them in the classroom, it would increase sensitivity and decrease calling the police on students.
- Intangibles
 - The parents in my group felt teachers should provide a nurturing spirit to the students. Words such as sensitivity, compassion, supportive, loving, and caring were brought up as missing in some classrooms.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

When it came to resource imbalances, the parents in this group felt the topic was also old news. They feel things have not changed but were part of this conversation in hopes that in another 3-5 years from now they would have made and seen a difference. Questions and curiosities arose around how the wealth can be shared and where funding was going. As one parent put it: "Some things are not adding up."

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Parents would like UDSD to help organize fundraising in the community. They would also like to see it lead the charge in creating dialogue and brainstorming

on how the tight budgets can be shifted, and determining what school gets what.

- UDSD to create a committee to get input from parents. The observer in the group chimed in about the next step in the UDR process and the creation of the Advisory Board to help with that.
- One parent was from Beverly Hills and was tired of hearing negative things about the students and the area. The other parents agreed that the school district could do a better job of calling parents to communicate and share good things happening with their children, and not just the bad. They further agreed that BH was a truly diverse area, and that's where most of the businesses are. The UDSD needs to include these businesses in the conversation, and the Advisory Board. There was a sentiment that the community and businesses surrounding the schools don't have insight into how the schools are truly doing, and how they can help. One parent offered that some of these businesses donate to sports, but not to education.
- One parent said: "Communicate the reflection of good back to the community."
- Another parent said at the end of this theme that she's sensing the school district needs a "rebrand."

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

All of the parents felt that diversity is part of the job and the teachers needed to adjust to their environment. There was an emphasis (and continuation from Theme 1) on the importance of teachers educating themselves. As one parent put it, "If the teachers aren't educating themselves, they are failing the students." To go a bit further, the parents agreed that re-education was needed. Because environments and cultures are different, a continuous effort to understand the landscape was seen as mandatory and critical. "We're life-long learners."

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- The UDSD to make diversity trainings non-negotiable. As part of this, UDSD needs to hold teachers accountable with observations. They should also be open to receiving feedback from parents and students through dialogue and surveys.
- The UDSD needs to create an environment of accountability. Part of this will be through observations and the other part should be encouraging teachers to hold each other accountable: Foster conversations and exchanges where

they can learn from one another, and safely speak up if one of their own acts out.

- As one parent put it: “We need to have those uncomfortable conversations.”
- In addition, mental health stigmas came up in this conversation. The parents would like to see teachers equipped with updated trainings and resources to share with parents and students.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The group was on the fence with the question, and most settled on yes and no: Yes, it’s a collective hub. However, to put all of the responsibility on the school and education seems a bit much. One parent commented that we [society] put a lot of accountability on the school and it’s not shared with citizens. It’s a shared responsibility.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- The schools and surrounding communities need to share accountability and responsibility. The schools and its teachers are the eyes and ears of parents during the day. Parents continue nurturing the students after school hours.
- Early mitigation is key. The schools need to involve parents early on and not just call them when there’s an issue. One parent commented that kids tend to hide things, and they think they’re the only ones going through stuff. Parents want to know how their children are doing overall, including the positive.
- Schools need to provide the space for dialogue to occur. There are too many opportunities for miscommunication.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTION

By the end, the group felt strongly that diversity trainings, accountability, and tapping into the knowledge and resources of parents and the surrounding communities were strong themes. In addition, they felt certain keywords should drive the UDSD’s actions moving forward, including compassion, nurturing, and commitment.

- Personal responsibility and accountability are non-negotiables for teachers.
- Diversity and sensitivity trainings are highly needed.
- The community is rich with knowledge and history, and UDSD needs to utilize that.

- Over-communication is not a bad thing. Parents are interested in how they're children are doing, good and not-so-good.
- Students need their classrooms to reflect their experiences. Teachers need to understand what is going on in their communities, and their world at large.
- Hire teachers that care.

GROUP 6

MODERATOR: LAUREN HIRSHON

- Positive, enthusiastic, thoughtful, reflective, candid participants.
- The group was open to sharing their stories, perspectives, and ideas.
- Deep commitment to Upper Darby.
- Appreciative of the opportunity to be a part of the process.
- Everyone seemed to enjoy hearing different viewpoints – student, alum, teacher, social worker, parents, etc.
- Valued the diversity of the community.
- We could have spent longer discussing each topic.

People were curious to hear other perspectives and learn from each other. A few participants barely spoke, but those who were engaged were present, participated throughout, and were excited to build off of each other's ideas.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Requires time to understand each other.
- Hard to know all 60 different cultures.
- Hard to differentiate bullying vs playing.
- Patience from students, teachers, administrators.
- Need to constantly invite and expand the community to create a place of belonging as new people move to Upper Darby.
- Must address the changing culture of rivalry.
- Must address the dynamics with different cliques.
- Students sharing that they have been bullied may feel like nothing has happened in response.
- Excited about a more restorative model of discipline.
- Aim for reconciliation, rather than punitive actions.
- Importance and power of home environment on school interactions.
- The District should model behaviors of taking responsibility. For example, apologizing to students for mishandling situations. This is a critical step to rebuilding trust.
- It must be safe for students to address bullying. Helpful to raise awareness among students and parents about the anonymous tip line.

- Recognize that students feel hopeless, and are acting out, if not being challenged.
- Value of restorative justice training.
- Clear communication between teachers, students, and parents would help to establish clear expectations, particularly for students.
- Parents play a critical role in coaching students through situations with bullying. Those stories, examples, and models of behavior can be lifted up.
- A reminder that there is a grieving process if someone is hurt by another person, institution, etc. and that should be addressed.
- Improve internal communications (ex: Social worker and administration strengthen communication around bullying situations).

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- It's important to create a culture, processes, and training to help people take a step back, take a deep breathe, and focus on solutions, not finger pointing.
- People – students, teachers, staff – would benefit from help differentiating between bullying and playing around.
- Raise awareness about resources, such as the anonymous tip line, for students who report bullying and are afraid sharing it with staff, teachers, and administrators might make it worse.
- Increase understanding about the changing culture of rivalry and the dynamics of different cliques and experiment with strategies to address this.
- Improve communications externally and internally around bullying. For example, sharing with students who report bullying, social workers involved, and other interested parties what comes of reporting behaviors.
- Focus on restorative models of discipline, rather than punitive approaches.
- Rebuild trust by finding opportunities for the District to model behaviors of taking responsibility, such as apologizing to students for mishandling situations.
- Seek out opportunities to address underlying causes of acting out.
- Enhance communications and clarify behavioral definitions of bullying for students, parents, and teachers.
- Lift up stories, examples, and models of behavior and strategies to address bullying, for example how parents are effectively coaching their children through situations with bullying.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Some principals are proactive and very involved in addressing resource needs.
- Asking teachers if parents can do anything else for the classroom is helpful.
- Powerful, culture and ethic of endurance in Upper Darby.
- A lack of basic resources (i.e. heat) causes havoc in the classroom and addressing it would make a big difference.

- In under-resourced schools, moving to online teaching has increased access in some instances and made learning more interesting for some.
- Support resources are really critical.
- The adopt a student program is a great support resource, but teachers are not compensated for their participation.
- Expand the adopt a student program.
- The adopt-a-student program highlights inequities across schools.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Celebrate teachers, administrators, and staff who are going above and beyond to provide additional support and resources.
- Continue to regularly ask teachers what can be done for their classrooms.
- Prioritize addressing basic resource needs, like heating.
- Prioritize support resources, particularly in under resourced schools.
- Expand the adopt-a-student program.
- Post-COVID, maintain online innovations that have increased access to resources and made learning more interesting.
- Develop an inventory and case studies of ways faith groups, non-profits, neighborhood associations, and others are serving schools so that these innovations can be magnified.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- It is challenging to understand students and families lived realities
- There's often too much judgement from staff about how families operate that might be different from their own families
- It's valuable to get help unpacking our own cultures.
- Operating from a lens of justice rather than care creates challenges.
- Principals who are supportive of teachers make a big difference.
- There is a gap in cultural, ethnic, and racial representation across District staff and leadership.
- Diverse graduates of the District, who are now professionals, could get involved with students to increase the cultural, ethnic, and racial representation.
- Training on brain science is valuable for teachers and staff.
- It's important to help students have a voice in the classroom.
- To promote diversity among administration and faculty, the District currently runs a club that focuses on encouraging non-white students to become educators.
- Some students have had very positive experiences with the people in their school who are open and accepting.
- The Districts diversity creates important exposure, access, and awareness for students of different cultures that is a tremendous asset and brings deep beauty.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Strive to create a culture and environment that emphasizes connection, non-judgement, and increased understanding across students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators.
- Provide teachers, staff, and administrators with tools to help unpack and understand their own cultures.
- Prioritize an ethic of care.
- Change the Districts hiring practices to be more responsive and reflective of the ways the District's demographics have changed.
- Draw upon alumni to increase the diversity of people serving students.
- Trainings to help staff, teachers, and administrators understand students and families lived realities and different cultures would be valuable.
- Continue and expand training on brain science for teachers, staff, and administrators.
- Find opportunities to lift up student voices in the classroom.
- It's important to realize the 'both and' of diversity. Often assets can be challenges.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- A vacant building next to 69th street could be turned into a community center to provide resources and support for students and families.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

- Often assets can be challenges.
- It's important to realize the 'both and' of diversity.
- Upper Darby is a place of deep beauty.
- You have to model the behavior you want to see from students and staff, listen before decisions are made, be transparent about why certain decisions are made, and be open to being wrong.
- We should communicate more – internally and externally.
- It's important to increase communication about resources and programs.
- Thank you all for this. I think it'll be good to focus on who Upper Darby wants to become and working toward that becoming - more so than doing.

GROUP 7

MODERATOR: GERMAINE INGRAM

This was an animated group, with a couple of natural storytellers. They had lots to say and the session probably could have gone on another 30 minutes without even touching the 4th theme. They were readily responsive when I asked them to give space for another participant. There was not always agreement, but they were respectful of others, and were clear in how their views might be different from those of others in the group. Some of them shared things about themselves that were quite personal, especially in the context of this forum.

One participant posed a question early about feeling that everyone there wants the same thing—excellent education — so what’s the value of these forums if significant parts of the community don’t engage in the conversation. I explained that I don’t have enough knowledge of the Upper Darby context to venture a confident answer, but I offered two points; 1. Even among the “choir” there are differing opinions about how to get to a shared goal, and there are ways that the choir can be more effective in their collective efforts (the choir can benefit from rehearsals); and 2. If they attend the forums and feel that their voice matters, they can spread that message to people who are standing on the sidelines because they don’t think their voice makes a difference.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The group leapt into the discipline discussion, even before reviewing the stories. One participant talked about having worked in a district parenting center and how she saw poor parenting skills that lead to discipline problems. As might be expected, there was general outrage over Story #3. They wanted to know whether anyone was held accountable for having the kids handcuffed; who was the principal/vice principal? One participant said the story was “heartbreaking” and evidence that there is a lot more work to be done on diversity. A couple of participants related how their children were bullied, or how they themselves were bullied. “Lockdown drills are scary”, said one participant, and related how hearing the story made him angry, as it called up a memory of being wrestled to the ground and handcuffed when he was mistaken for someone else when he attended high school in N.E. Philadelphia.

One participant said that Story #3 demonstrated the need for clear protocols around lock-downs. Another participant responded that the problem wasn’t a lack of protocol; it was a lack of common sense on part of school administrators. A white participant said that race shouldn’t matter here. There was consensus on the need to hold the administrators accountable. One person said that school staff sometimes panic and overreact to a situation, rather than de-escalating it.

There was a positive response to Story #1, but some participants said that the kind of teacher responsiveness shown here is not standard practice. One said: “There are a couple of good teachers.” Another said that while he’s been home during the

pandemic, he's seen teachers "just dialing it in" with their teaching. Another participant said, with respect to Stories #1 and #2, that you first need to understand everyone's culture, then you can talk about norms. One person related a story about how her son, following counseling from the principal, stepped up to protect a kid who was being bullied. Then her son got a detention for fighting.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Greater accountability for school administrative staff
- Journaling and workshops for kids to help them advocate for themselves, helped them not feel trapped in a bullying situation.
- More emphasis on understanding of cultural practices with regard to parenting and behavior.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

All of the participants talked about how they see disparities. They had various comments about why disparities exist and how to address them. One participant, whose kids attend Drexel Hill, said that "not having money sucks". He feels that as more renters occupy the area, there is less personal investment in the community. He said he has no solutions but wants to know more about where the district's money comes from and how it is spent. Another participant, who has grown children who attended UDSD, said there have always been disparities among the schools. She talked about how her daughter, as a teen, noted disparities in the tools and support for clubs and sports. She spoke of applying for grants and getting donations to fill the gaps.

A participant recalled the stark contrast between what he experienced in his neighborhood school in Philadelphia and what he saw when he transferred to Geo Washington High School in the Northeast. He was "astounded" by the clubs they had at Geo Washington. He talked about how important clubs can be in the overall learning experience.

One participant talked about the financial sacrifices she makes in order to provide her children with a quality of summer and after school activities that the UDSD doesn't meet. She said that the tax base is weak because there aren't enough businesses to tax. She was particularly concerned about disparities in facilities. This point was picked up by another participant who talked about her concerns around ventilation and heat. She said that she won't send her son to Beverly Hills because of the condition of the facilities. She said that she loves the district, but it has to do better with facilities. One participant said that it's "absurd" that the district would spend money on sports while facilities go wanting.

The role of Harrisburg came up. One participant talked about the fair funding formula, and how the state share of district funding needs to increase. She said that

she travels to Harrisburg every year to advocate for fair funding. Another participant said that education should be well- supported, regardless of where you live.

Parental priorities got a fair amount of attention. Some participants talked about how some parents buy cell phones and UGGs for their kids, but balk when asked to pay for trips and activities. A parent of adult children raised how she explained to her daughter in high school the need to make choices in order to stay within the budget of a single parent. Another participant spoke about doing fundraising to pay for activities for his daughter and sharing the proceeds with other families. A couple of participants talked about how they are trying to build financial literacy in their children, and the need for schools to do more in this area.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Greater transparency in where the district gets its funding and how resources are allocated.
- More citizen voice in decisions about how resources are allocated.
- More education in financial literacy for students.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

There was general consensus about the vagueness of the term “diversity” and some questioned whether “diversity” is used as a “crutch” to justify some administrative decisions that don’t have clear rationale. One person said that diversity is not an asset if we don’t do anything to take advantage of that asset. Another person agreed that diversity is a loose term and said that it loses meaning and stimulates fear when it’s not clear how the term is being used.

One participant said that she thinks that the district was better at diversity a decade or so ago than it is now. She gave an example of an international bazaar that used to happen. She said that it was a way of exposing people to the different cultures in the community and building understanding. This participant also recounted a time when her now-adult daughter attended a diversity training with young people from outside the UD district. In one exercise, the young people were asked to rank from among several choices who they were least likely to bring home. She was shocked by how many of the young people said that they were more likely to bring a Nazi home than a black person.

One participant said that he served with all kinds of people in the military and that he considers diversity a strength. And yet, he said sometimes “diversity” gets “rammed down your throat”.

An AA mother said that “it means the world to me” that there is a Black principal at Hillcrest. But there needs to be diversity in the teaching staff. In contrast to this view, an AA male parent said that having a Black principal or a Black president

doesn't mean anything to him. He said that he feels no stigma related to color, and that he's taught his kids not to see color.

One participant talked about having two "disabled" sons. Diversity doesn't get discussed enough with respect to disability.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Experiential training in cultural literacy.
- A clear definition of what the district means by diversity. Approach diversity in a way that doesn't feel like a bludgeon and does not instill fear.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

There was generally a positive attitude toward the district. That said, there were questions about teachers' commitment, the vision for the diversity effort, and about how resources are allocated. But these concerns didn't suggest cynicism. There was a sense of investment in the district throughout the group.

GROUP 8

MODERATOR: SERRANO LEGRAND

There were four participants and one observer in the group. All the participants in the group were perceivably female. Many had children who attended some of the elementary schools while some others had children who have graduated from Upper Darby schools.

Several members identified as being an immigrant and a first-generation family living in the United States and being in the Upper Darby School District. Several members spoke English as a second (or third) language. Several children were present with their parents during the Zoom session.

In general, this group was lively and had a robust discussion about discipline and bullying, resources, diversity and engagement. This group found difficulty with some of the prompts, particularly those that might have lacked or needed more context and details (e.g., the story about those children being handcuffed).

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Some more context is needed for stories.

- It is concerning that children got handcuffed.
- One participant shares story of her child feeling/being ostracized. Teachers supported child going through these feelings. Parent felt teachers did a really good job winning their child over and supporting them.
- Conversations between parents and kids are important as well as those they have with the faculty.
- Some children are different (e.g., too friendly) and ironically, are seen as outcasts.
- Parents need to work to discipline and discuss with their children what's appropriate and what's not.
- Fine line between teaching students the right way and not scarring them forever (e.g., punishment shouldn't be harsh, should be healing and restorative).

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Children being handcuffed is not okay. Discipline here went "overboard."
- Handcuffing students takes away students' capacity to want to ask for help in the future.
- Should always have extra hands in the hallway to support.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- These stories conjured up frustration and the circumstances are important to look at instead of just being black and white.
- Bus services are not being provided to middle school students within a 1 mile area.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- School District should take advantage of revamping mechanical systems of schools while children are not in physical school buildings.
- Transportation and schedules (half days) need to accommodate working parents who are not available during the daytime.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- All comments chosen were negatively biased. Is this representative of all the issues in the SD?

- Teachers not being able to relate to students; teachers who may be drawn to certain areas have certain level of skills as they relate to understanding children (and their cultural backgrounds).
- Include more resources and trainings for teachers to help build their cultural competences.
- Teachers should have conversations with students specifically geared toward learning about the different cultures.
- It is the small moments and exchanges between teacher and student that matter the most.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- The SD needs more curriculum that is more culturally relevant, understanding and responsive to the child's culture and background.
- The SD should include days where students learn and engage in different cultures.
- Expose teachers to more diverse student populations and train them on how to deal with and teach to these diverse student populations.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Parent communication is strong and effective (wife and husband gets a lot of emails).
- SD really wants to know parents well and engaging the neighborhood more.
- Remove the fear that parents have about engaging with each other
- The pandemic has pushed people farther apart (out of caution) but how do we get closer?
- Home and School Meetings are helpful to bridge the divide; strengthen connections.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- With minimum experience in the SD, emails and phone calls have been sufficient (keep doing)
- SD seems to be doing their best with engagement and addressing technology issues (keep doing).
- Come together and build more community (once pandemic is addressed).
- Safety is always important and should be a priority.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

Many in the group agreed discipline should never get to a point in which students are arrested and that the school district's approach should be restorative and more healing. As one parent put it, there is a "fine line between teaching students the

right way and not scarring them forever”, nor “taking away their ability to want to ask for help in the future”.

Additionally, some discussed the need to include more training and development for teachers: mainly in them being to be more culturally competent and responsive.

GROUP 9

MODERATOR: KIM LEICHTNER

This group consisted of five women, 4 African-Americans and one Spanish-speaker. All were parents of students in the district at Bywood Elementary School. There were two observers. Most of the participants were there to listen.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The participants did not have any comments in reaction to the stories presented nor did they have their own stories to share.

One participant said her son just started in the district in virtual school so she didn't have any issues or complaints about the school.

Another participant who works in the district said that behavior in the classroom is definitely a problem. Something needs to be done so it's less disruptive for the rest of the students, but she's not sure what the solution is.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Teachers really need to listen to our kids – they don't know what's happening in kids' homes. Can teachers please listen and have compassion for our kids? Educate teachers to have more patience and treat our kids kindly.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Story 1 – If a child couldn't afford to go on a trip, maybe have the parents do some type of community service to help pay for the child to go on trip so the child doesn't feel left out. One participant stated, “I have a child who attends St. Lawrence and if I had an issue with tuition, I could do community service or work out something like that to help pay for her tuition.”

- Story 2 – A participant who works in the district said that she’s experienced this because she’s had to wear her coat in the building. “What does the district expect students to do when they’re cold and the heat is broken? They have to stay warm.” The school should solve the problem by either fixing or upgrading the heating system in the building (she’s seen some improvements in the past 2 years) or let children keep their hoodies on without the hood because it’s freezing in the building.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Communication is the key to everything – if heating system is broken, send a note home to families telling them about it and suggest students wear sweaters and warmer clothes to school
- If families can’t afford to go on a trip, offer alternatives such as volunteering/community service to help offset costs so the child can go on the trip
- Teachers should communicate students’ progress in school with families vs. letting kids fail or fall through the cracks under the guise of teaching them to learn to be independent. “We should work together. You have to build a relationship with the parents and communicate with them.”

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

One participant said that she has a 27-year-old son who attended UDSD who’s biracial. She experienced problems with race where her son was being teased because they didn’t know what nationality he was. “I want to see this get better -- in how children are treated in the district because of the color of their skin. Children can sense when someone doesn’t care for them.”

Another participant said that she’s pleading with the school district to teach teachers how to listen and understand. “Us Africans, when they hear our accent, they ignore us. Just listen and understand the person, have patience... if you listen, you’ll take away one or two new things from us. This community is so diverse and some people aren’t ready for it but they need to be ready for it. They need to treat every child with respect because everyone’s background is rich. We came here for a better life for our kids, but we didn’t come from nothing.”

There was strong agreement in the room that if you don’t get to know a child’s background and what they’ve been through, you can’t judge them because you have to look at underlying things that led to the kid’s behavior. There needs to be more education on all these cultures – main thing is to show respect and not judge. “We feel attacked, they look at us Black people as lacking education and don’t respect us as parents.”

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Actions:

- Require teachers to go through diversity/inclusion training
- Build relationships with families (e.g. home visits)
- Offer teachers and staff members classes or opportunities to meet with different ethnic groups such as through multicultural conversation groups. There's a need to have more communication with the community to come together and learn about others' cultures. "This needs to be a team effort."
- Hire more staff that reflects the diversity of the students. There are more white teachers that work in UDSD and they're teaching African-American kids. The teacher's verbal and body language means a lot. They need to be open to learning about their student's cultures/heritage.
- One observer shared, "I have a friend who is from Trinidad and has an education degree but is struggling to get credentialing to be a certified educator here. If the district could support certification programs from people from other countries, they can transfer their education to work in the district. My friend is employed by the district as an aide but could be paid more if she had credentials."

Guidelines:

- Treat everyone with respect. Respect families varying cultures and backgrounds.
- UDSD needs to teach/train teachers and social workers to not look down on anyone, not to judge people by the color of their skin. Be nonjudgmental and make families feel welcomed and accepted.
- Listen to families – be open-minded and understanding
- "Children model what they see parents do as adults." Be respectful to the parents.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Participants expressed that there was a huge need for translation services in the community.

One participant said that it is not necessarily the district's responsibility to be a hub, but it would be helpful for them to bring the community together through an event like a carnival. She gets together once a month with various communities from her daughter's private school to bring the community together and open up communication barriers. Could UDSD do something like this for its community?

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- The district needs translators to communicate with the families. One participant said she knows of an Arabic parent who got an email about today's forum and wanted to attend today's meeting but wasn't able to

because she didn't have a translator to explain to her how she could participate.

- Communicate to families in a language they understand and use multiple channels of communication (email, notes from school, phone call).

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

Participants were in agreement about how Black students are treated differently in the district and that there was a need for improvement in communication between the district and families.

Respect everyone's unique backgrounds and open communication, including communicating to families in a language they understand.

GROUP 10

MODERATOR: KIERSTEN MAILLER

Civil, diverse group. Some folks were ramblers, but it fit well in the discussion and people were mostly respectful.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Teachers feel this issue is often overblown in community.

Students need to feel respected, honored, involved.

Kids have one-off fights, but it'd different from bullying. With the lockdown, some comments were troublesome, but the pandemic made it so.

Parent: My daughter had an ongoing situation where there was one kid who was bullying her based on her academic skill but was the same level as her. It affects how a kid learns if they don't feel comfortable going to school. When the issue was raised, they fixed it immediately. Communication with counselor, teacher, social worker, parents, kids, essential. Kid needs to report it first. Parents don't expect teachers to be mind readers. "" District able to report back quickly about fixes.

As a teacher it is very hard to recognize bullying, because kids won't report out of embarrassment. You can feel when you walk into a school whether you will be respected. It comes from leadership and is not the same in every school. Leadership sets the tone.

Kids are being judged by appearance. Her child in Bywood pre-covid. Kids will not report unless you have that communication with parents, you need to know your

kids. daughter didn't have her lunch because another student took it from her. She didn't tell her teacher, didn't want to tell the principal who the child was. In her mind it's not "bullying" but it clearly started from home with that child's family.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- District: more observant. More teachers or assistants. Additional communication, cataloging.
- Empowering students: bringing more young people into these conversations. end-to-end, getting to know the kids well so you know when things are wrong
- If it's not being done already, more training in cultural competency. More training and sensitivity, understanding student backgrounds. District has done training in trauma informed care, which is the right direction. Student involvement is essential.
- More recruitment of diverse staff: more people who look like the children in the district. More examples of successful people of color. Children should not go their whole time in school without seeing someone who looks like them.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

One participant was a teacher during the heating situation. More perception v. reality. Do not believe that there was an intent to have kids come to school. This just happened and could not be addressed quickly; someone told the news and it made it worse. It's not like they were giving that heat to Drexel Hill. No AC in the summer either. Students were not given detentions because they had jackets. that was blown out of proportion. Only asked to remove hoods.

Funding issue across the state. Not particular to Upper Darby.

If you're a parent who has a steady job and can also be involved, it is so much different from a parent who can't be involved because of their workload.

I don't remember being without when I was a student. They gave things to kids in need. I don't remember that the state wasn't helping. I see the funding as OK, there are much worse schools in Philly. I still try to be involved as a single mom. It's hard to keep up with all the weekday scheduling.

I don't think we're so underfunded that we can't keep kids comfortable, but just budget correctly.

Exams dictate the average, but inequities come when you compare with schools with unlimited resource. This district has additional students of color, many with special needs. The community is highly taxed, but then the state cuts funding and those are resources we're expecting. It hurts more when you cut what is already low compared to other districts where families have money and the budget is higher. UD kids speak 80+ languages, and there should be additional funding to address that. Most budgets are based on staffing.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- State needs to fix the way they distribute funds. Schools five miles away shouldn't be getting more money, especially if the kids are passing exams at a higher rate already (funding for tutors and 1-1 time)
- Parents need to be more involved at BH: set up trips.
- A child's zip code should not dictate the kind of education they receive.
- Some schools are just not up to par because the schools are so old.
- Participatory budgeting would be helpful.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

Getting to know your students is huge. Teachers are overwhelmed with curriculum. Need to just sit down with kids and ask them about their backgrounds.

I don't believe that race is the only factor, there could be a bad teacher who is a person of color. The most important thing is the love and empathy for the children, wanting to make a difference. Not just a certain demographic of teacher. Representation in general is important. But more importantly, people who care.

"Dad, I don't understand why we're reading Tom Sawyer and how this has any relevance in my life. I want more connection to these characters."

One of the major strengths is the diversity; you don't see that in most places. Even just black and white has so much diversity: not just black, but Haitian, Brazilian ... so many sub-groups.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Middle schools in Atlanta addressed this same issue: Would either do a specific course for all students where they talked about differences and diversity. Putting on all kinds of events, decorating each hallway with a different continent. Kids could see the different cultures, learn geography, see similarities (like folk music).

- Younger kids should experience this as well, teaching different languages early - second grade?
- Model UN? Helpful for learning.
- Training: All schools need cultural competency training; skills also are for work and life beyond school.
- More celebration of each sub-group.
- Start with learning names and how to pronounce their names correctly.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

As a teacher, this was very hard, to get parents to come to the school. The same parents come to every meeting. Same when he went to his children's school.

Jobs keep us from being as involved as we want to be. There are so many events, you can get really overwhelmed.

On a recent cleanup, they went around and asked people to be involved. There is a mistrust in the community: unhappy paying school taxes and feeling like they don't benefit.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Best way is to meet people where they're at: door to door and meet families. In Highland Park, teachers would go to family homes and read to the kids. In a non-Covid world: meeting the parents at home would help to keep an open line of communication. (Other view: Some people may not be OK with teachers coming into their lives: "I may not have everything under control.")
- Parents may see the schools as a fortress due to presence or language barrier. Same with businesses, get to know people and develop relationships, then invite them in, and provide food! Lecturing doesn't work, have something to actively have them do and work on. Staff is creating an escape room where families are working on something together: more interactive.
- Plan around parent's work schedule. It shouldn't be hard for a parent to be engaged if their child is their main priority. Some parents don't have a set schedule and have difficulties getting themselves to the school. Zoom helps a lot. Reminders are essential. Don't change the time on parents.

- There is a mistrust in the community: unhappy paying school taxes and feeling like they don't benefit. Want to see the schools open up and connect more, have classes (sewing, yoga) etc. to open it up to community and feel more connected.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

Communication came up as a theme that connected all of the topics: The need to communicate better with your own kids, with teachers, with the wider community, and about things like budget (including participatory budgeting).

The idea that not all people feel comfortable reporting, asking, approaching authority figures of the monolith of the school district, means that people would benefit from more relationship building.

Understanding one another's lenses and backgrounds and cultures is an essential first step for every one of these topics.

GROUP 11

MODERATOR: CHRIS SATULLO

This 7-person group, all women, brought an interesting mix of backgrounds and connections with the district to the forum. This diversity produced a lively discussion, whose tone was mostly upbeat and collaborative. Four of them had children in the district now - and all were very positive about the district. One of the mothers was of West African origin, another Chinese; one Black; and one White (a person who chose to buy a home, despite Realtor resistance, in Upper Darby because of its diversity). Two of the other women were white, one an aide at district school, another a retired nurse whose daughter-in-law teaches in the district and who came because she wanted to support the proposed new middle school. Finally, there was an educator from outside Upper Darby whose nephew, with whom she seems very involved, goes to a district school.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

This group agreed that often both parents and teachers are so stressed and overwhelmed by their daily grind that communication falters and children don't get either the discipline or the nurturing they need. The group members were inclined to be generous, not judgmental, about the adults' failings.

They agreed that teachers need more resources and support, while parents deserve better understanding from the school of the challenges they face.

The woman who works as a school aide noted: "It's very hard to have one policy evenly enforced when you have so many different parental views." She mentioned where a teacher holding a child by the shoulders to get them back into line was interpreted by parents as corporal punishment.

They described a difficult balance for both sides: Parents should advocate for their children but not assume they're angels and to recognize their duty to make discipline start at home. Teachers have to reach out and listen with empathy to parents, understanding the cultural differences that might be at play both with a child's behavior and a parent's way of relating to the school.

That said, the white mother who choose UDSD for its diversity had a very emotional response to the provided story about two Black boys being handcuffed in a hallway: "I have no words. That is just crazy, that they would do that to children. And I know it wouldn't happen to my son. Because he's not black. At first I was skeptical as I listened to the story, going 'No way!' But now, as we talk about it, I realize, "Yeah, way.' In my backyard. I had no idea."

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Training for both sides of the cultural equation:
- For teachers: More training on cultural differences among parents and in different groups' ways of teaching good behavior to children.
- For parents: More training in how to spot the signs that a child may a) be experiencing bullying or violence or b) be feeling the kind of frustration, anger or alienation that can lead to acting out and disciplinary problems.
- More after school problems - so that idle children don't get into trouble outside of school.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

The provided stories about disparities resonated for this group as on-point.

"We really are not one, whole community yet."

"These stories break my heart; my kids, and this was long ago, so looked forward to and benefited from these trips."

“At my school, we were told we were not allowed to fundraise for fifth graders to go to camp. But Aronimink is allowed to fund raise and does so much of it that their kids all go. Why?”

“District needs to address this disparity; if some can’t go, maybe none should go.”

The story about the broken heat at Beverly Hills led to a different discussion, about how perceptions about disparities can be as damaging as disparities themselves:

“My kid goes to Drexel Hill Middle School. It’s cold there, too. They have to attend classes in trailers, too.”

“The problem is parents are heard much more at Drexel Hill than Beverly Hills; it’s a diversity thing and an economic thing.”

The group also spent time on the outside disparities. Some of them explained to the rest of the group about the disinvestment in schools under the Corbett administration and how its effects linger to this day.

Quote: “We need to lobby the lawmakers to get rid of this zip code crap.”

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- 1) One parent suggested: “Maybe we should fund raise as a whole district, not just school by school. I know I for one might be inclined to dig a little deeper if I knew my money would be used around the district to address these disparities.”
- 2) The educator with the nephew in the district had a fascinating take on the camping trip story:

“What if we think through just what impact we are trying to drive by having kids go to this camp. Can we get the same impact by different, cheaper means so that all can go?”

“We want them to experience the outdoors, maybe learn a new skill or two and we want them to learn teamwork. Could we do that with day trips to a closer park, like Ridley State Park? And could we do it across schools, so kids from multiple schools are mixing, meeting and learning from each other. It could be less expensive, but cross-pollinating.”
- 3) District should give parents background info, talking points and training how to advocate for equity in school funding from Harrisburg.

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

All present regarded UDSD's diversity as a huge asset, despite many misunderstandings that linger around the topic.

The person who insisted on buying in Upper Darby: "We wanted character in a house. Realtor kept pushing Havertown. They're so fixated around the school districts, but they really don't know anything. They couldn't imagine how the diversity and the type of housing here were pluses to us."

The school district aide, responding to one of the critical quotes provided:

"I really get tired of people talking down about Upper Darby School District. The teachers *do* get diversity education. It's not true that the teachers are not taught about cultural diversity. Some maybe don't like that they are. And it's not just teachers, it's everyone, the aides, the groundskeepers. I wish I'd grown up with this kind of knowledge. There's so much misunderstanding on both sides. We have to get people to open their minds."

On recruitment: "All school districts have to ask: Where are we recruiting for teachers, administrators? Your workforce should represent the cultural resources that are in your community."

The Chinese-American mother said staff at Aronimink works hard on diversity. Her son did well with an ELL teacher in first grade who "worked hard with him." She also said her child had had some adjustment problems to school and the staff was very understanding and worked with her on how to help him. "Very good talks. So proud of those teachers; they are very good for us."

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- More public messaging about the equity program.
- Put together a program for Realtors on the *real* UDSD.
- Recruit teachers from HBCUs. Sell the diversity of the district to them.
- The cross-pollinating day camp idea from Theme 2 connects here, too.

THEME 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ISLAND OR HUB?

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

We had only moments for this theme, but the group saw the "fund raise for the whole district" and "enlist the community in making the case for school funding" ideas as connecting to this theme.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

Parents and teachers should be generous to one another in understanding the stresses each side deals with.

The Upper Darby schools are doing a lot of things right with insufficient resources and more people should be told that more often.

Think more creatively and holistically to address imbalances among schools.

Do not keep UDSD's light under a bushel.

GROUP 12

MODERATOR: HARRIS SOKOLOFF

There were five active participants, 2 participants who didn't speak at all and 1 school board observer. The active participants included one teacher who is new to the district and four parents. While some participants were more animated than others, each was engaged and contributed throughout the session.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

One mother told a story about a about her son who was bullied by a student who was still being tested for learning/behavior issues and the district said it couldn't take the child out of the class until testing was done. Bullying got worse and once child was taken out, her child began to bully others. Didn't feel her child was protected at all.

Another told a story: when I came to this country and my child was getting ready to go to school I heard stories about bullies, so I taught my child how to react if that would happen to him. Everything starts in the family, and "Parents need to teach children not to bully others and how to respond to bullying if someone does it to them."

My 9th grader was bullied in 8th grade, but because they had procedures in place to work through it, the school was able to stop the problem.

It's not right that children would be handcuffed the way they were in the 3rd story.

When I've spoken with teachers at Beverley Hills Middle School, they say that they spend too much time on discipline and can't teach. Things at home spill into the classroom.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

- Seek to understand before you discipline the child
- Important to have procedures in place that all understand

- Important for school professionals to understand the culture of the child comes from
- May need to translate policies to immigrant parents and talk about cultural differences in how this works.
- Issue of testing to determine child's level of understanding and needs
- Need to develop proactive plans as early as possible.
- Need to find a range of practices (not just punishment) that will work.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Being active in BHMS, there was always talk that DHMS got more than at BHMS. I never understand why there would be a huge gap between the two.
- Some parents can afford more, but it's one district so why are different resources available at different schools. District should distribute resources equally.
- I wasn't aware there were differences between the two middle schools. And there should be equal resources in the district.
- Surrounding district are hybrid and not us. Why can't we be open during Covid? Other districts are, why not us?
- We need district policies that can account for differences in the ability of different HSAs to raise money
- Understand the district is working on improving facilities
- There's a great difference between what different HSAs can do. Highland Park HSA has lots of parents at meetings; very active (parents and teachers) and supported all kids regardless of parental ability. BHMS is very different has low attendance at HSA meetings, but great participation in fund raising (particularly "Market Day" when even teachers participated by supporting fund raisers.)

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

ACTIONS

- Perhaps fund raisers that benefited ALL schools, so that all could come and benefit.
- Parents could participate in multiple HSA to create more collaboration and cooperation and mutual support.
- Create more communication across MS to find ways to address needs— create a "more equal playing field."

GUIDELINES

- Should be way of balancing what the different HSA's can support

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- I love the cultural diversity at our school. Some classes naturally teach cultural appreciation. For example, the French textbooks includes lessons on different French speaking cultures (e.g., in French, not just France but other French speaking countries such as Senegal) and talk about how it fits into our lives.
- When I moved here in December of 2000 my area was more Caucasian, now more diverse. Even the performing arts center sign embraces diversity now and it didn't before.
- Diversity issues change as kids get older and we have to do a better job explicitly embracing one another and each other's cultures.
- Some immigrants don't come to board meetings because they can't understand what's being said and we need translators.
- Doing a better job embracing immigrant cultures and people
- Try to understand the children first, not just discipline them. Help them not just punish them.
- But some parents/adults don't understand how diversity is positive. They try to stick together and send their children to a school with a lot of people of their culture, perhaps for protection of each other.

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

ACTIONS

- Parents' meetings, where they share experiences about the importance of diversity – how diversity is important. Immigrant parents will listen to the district and to other parents.
- Multi-cultural events are important – events that celebrate different cultures (food, dance, music, etc.).
- Perhaps a course for young students to learn about diversity, to value other cultures (but young children don't see race and if they focus on the difference may lead to confusion and separation).

GUIDELINES

- Having diversity in teachers will have positive impact on learning.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES OR CONNECTIONS

ACTION STEPS:

- *More events where people can embrace each other*
- *Need more interpreters/translators*

GUIDELINES:

- *Communication – increase amount across schools/parents will help with diversity, discipline, and resources*
- *Seek first to understand so we can develop ideas*

The group had some rich conversation; however, it was lopsided and driven by the participants with cameras on. In general, 2 attendees did not speak at all beyond the ice-breaker, while 2 other participants were the ones who spoke or asked clarifying questions for all prompts. The remaining two (including the Observer) would add things here and there during lulls or if asked directly. Even so, some valuable actions and guidelines were generated for UDSD. Some very minor tension appeared during the Diversity and Inclusion theme, when the two most vocal participants found they were out of sync on the topic of hiring more minority teachers and staff.

THEME 1: DISCIPLINE AND BULLYING: REAL AND HYPED

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- One personal story was told that related to some themes in the story blurbs on the slide, and the group spent most of the time on this topic
- In a nutshell, one participant witnessed a child being teased and bullied outside, in front of the school, and as the child ran back into school (after hours) to escape this, the kid got in trouble from school staff for entering during off hours.
 - Here, the child being bullied was seen as “the problem” by school staff, for breaking rules about entering the school during off hours
 - The participant had to explain to school staff that the child shouldn’t be punished: they were only trying to escape some bullying and harm happening outside
- The main theme here was that school staff often jump to discipline without truly understanding the problems at hand
- The child was treated as the problem (for re-entering the school), even though they were being bullied a minute before. The kid would have been punished, except for the participant’s intervention to explain the backstory that took place in the school yard
- Another example was given in which the school’s social work helped to intervene and get the full story of the conflict, which helped the participant understand and resolve the issue.
 - The activism of the school social worker was praised and seen as important; however, the parent stated that “she didn’t get a chance to interact with the other student’s parents” – which she felt would have been more helpful overall

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Action Steps Suggested:

- Make a clear cut documentation system to document bullying/discipline issues – involving both parents.
- Promote the resources that are available to help with this! -- it was difficult to find / find out about Social Workers, lead teachers, and other helpful resources
- Form response teams at each school that can handle all aspects and people involved in the issue – parents, students, teachers, etc.
- Have a Child Advocate role (doesn't necessarily have to be school based)

Proposed Guidelines

- Follow through on the documentation/communication system!
Complete it, start to finish
- WITH the community, review the bullying and discipline procedures and steps – and work to “plug-in” parents to the proper resources and staff for their particular level or concern within the overall bullying and discipline procedures
 - If it's a first incident, talk to X person
 - If it's on social media, contact our specialist; fill out a form, etc.

THEME 2: RESOURCE IMBALANCES: INSIDE AND OUT

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- The group first focused on the Speers Camping trip story
- Participants wondered about the availability / amount of financial aid for special trips, for under-resourced families
 - Financial aid for special trips could make things more equitable across the district
- Participants noted that some teachers are phenomenal at fundraising for their own students or classroom
 - Some teachers have the skills, resources, and time to pull this off, but many do not
 - Even something as simple as a movie night – where X percentage of ticket or food sales go to the classroom – can be really successful
 - Why not have the successful teachers “teach” other UDSD educators about how to fundraise for the classroom, for trips, etc.?
- The Home & School Association model is centered on a single school, not multiple schools in a district or multi-neighborhood region
 - HSAs for more well-off neighborhoods will ultimately have more resources than other HSAs

- Pre-COVID, HSA-based funding drives were often single school centric – raising money for a trip or a particular sports team
 - It might be better (presently, with COVID) to encourage the HSAs to do community-wide fundraising – either for the whole district or for a collection of individual schools
 - Or, when donating to a single-school HSA fundraiser, give parents the option to donate additional funds to help students from other UD schools get the same opportunity or equipment
- Participants wondered about the availability / amount of financial aid for special trips, for under-resourced families
 - Financial aid for special trips could make things more equitable across the district

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Action Steps Suggested:

- Create opportunities for individual UDSD teachers to “teach” their fellows about fundraising strategies and methods
- Give options to the parents and partners that donate to a particular school’s cause. For example, if giving \$20 to the HSA for a school trip, parents could donate an extra \$5 that would go to a communal pot for trip financial aid for other schools/students.

Proposed Guidelines

- The HSAs are limited to one school only. What about parent/school associations that cover multiple schools? Could make things more fair
- Consider community-wide fundraising drives that could fill resource gaps for particular schools from a community-wide, fundraised pot of money

THEME 3: DIVERSITY: AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Concern that the term “diversity” typically applies only to certain aspects of diverseness – e.g., race, gender expression, culture
 - What about diversity in abilities, or in special needs / special education kids?
 - These other aspects of diversity are not celebrated or supported like the other definitions of it
- One participant stated “we shouldn’t hire teachers of color solely for their ethnicity”
 - This generated some push-back and dialogue within the group

- Though no one got outwardly defensive or offensive during this exchange, there was some minor tension as participants shared and refined their views
 - As the topic wound down, participants considered diversity in staff as very important; though the original “diversity for diversity’s sake” claim was left alone – not picked up or reinforced beyond the first mention
- The overall “representativeness” of the district really needs to be looked at. It needs to be improved, celebrated, and claimed/owned by UDSD
- Overall, the group struggled with the format shift in this prompt, from the story-based work of the previous questions to the “short take-away” prompts for this one
- Two participants questioned about “diversity” vs. “inclusion” – and that both were important, but the latter can be much more meaningful/impactful
 - Additionally, one participant noticed that diversity is much lauded by the district, and spoken to at this meeting, but no one is giving facts/figures about UDSD’s diversity in the plenary
 - “How about putting a pie chart up-front that shows UDSD’s diversity, so we understand the baseline?”
- “Inclusion also means telling the truth, as well as learning the truth!”
 - A participant noted how disheartened she felt when her daughter was learning about Christopher Columbus around Thanksgiving
 - She had this very basic, 1-sided lesson about Columbus, and Columbus Day – without the genocide and damage and colonialization parts of the story! I had to fill in those parts for her after the lesson, so she could know the whole, inclusive story
 - Diversity and inclusion also means making space for other sides and other perspectives. The school district should be highlighting the other sides of the Columbus story, rather than relying on parents to fill this in
 - Some brief discussion about “age appropriate” lessons (grade school vs. high school)

ACTION STEPS OR GUIDELINES DISCUSSED:

Action Steps Suggested:

- Change the name of “Columbus Day” to “Indigenous Peoples Day”
- Hold more diversity trainings, but really expand notions of diversity: special needs kids, cultures, abilities. Honor all stories

Proposed Guidelines

- We need to work toward building and having more “representativeness” in general
- Really need to speak to and learn all sides of some of these issues / stories being taught
- Gather and hire more administrators that are representative of UD communities

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PUTTING IT TOGETHER: OVERALL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS

- Many of the Action Steps and proposed Guidelines spoken by the group follow themes: a) sharing more information, b) making space for different understandings and perspectives, and c) demonstrating inclusion by increasing representativeness and honoring additional perspectives.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE ZOOM CHAT

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO TAKE PART IN THIS EVENT?

- To be part of the community as a source of support
- I am an UD native - 61 years, a 24 yr. employee of UDSD and I love this community.
- I was born and raised in UDSD and am currently a teacher in UDSD -over 30 years. I love the community!
- Hello, I am a retired teacher and my husband is a retired professor. taught for 46 years and am now a substitute teacher in UDSD. We live in Secane and are always interested in our youth.
- Hello I Graduated from UDHA and went to Bywood for a short time.
- I have a nephew in UDSD who attends Bywood
- I live in and work for the UDSD plus I have two children who attend UDSD schools.
- I'm here because I have two children who go to school in this district.
- Hello, I have a Sophomore at UDHS and my daughter graduated last year.
- UDHS Technology Teacher, Love to find a new summer hands-on workshop opportunity for my UDHS students (Arduino and Wood Tech combined).
- I am here because I have a second grader attending Bywood elementary.
- Good Morning! I am here as a school board member but I also have a daughter in 5th grade at Highland Park and I have two successful college students who graduated in 2018 and 2020 from the UDSD!
- I've lived in UD all my life and graduated from the high. I'm here because I have two children at Bywood and I care about our community.
- My 2 girls attend Hillcrest Elementary School in Drexel Hill PA and I wanted to share some ideas and learn something as well.
- Hello, I have a first grader in the Autism Support Program at Primos.

- I live and work for UDSD my nephews also go to Bywood elementary.
- I have a second grader at Bywood Elementary.
- Hi all! I'm a social worker at the high school
- anytime I can get involved and help support my kids and the school I try to do what I can.
- I have 2 kids in UDSD 1 is in Bywood 2nd grade mms Crosby class 204.. my other daughter is in kindergarten center I wanted to join
- I live in Clifton Heights and have two kids one goes to Primos heading to the middle school next year and one in middle school heading to the high school next year. wanted to see what this is all about
- Good Morning, parent of a second grader at Bywood.
- Good morning I am a parent of two students in the district. I believe active engagement of all people in a community makes it more inclusive and a great place to live and work.
- Hello I'm a parent of a UDHS graduate Covid Class of 2020 & School Board Director. Welcome and Thank you for allowing me to work with you all.
- Good Morning! I serve on the school board. My children have attended district schools. My daughter is a proud graduate of the class of 2019! Thank you for participating today and being active members in our school community!
- Good Morning! I am a LTS at the Kindergarten Center. Very interested in making an impact in the SD and community.
- Good morning, everyone. I have two sons in high school, one at UDHS and one at Cardinal O'Hara.
- Hello I'm a UDSD graduate Class of '89, parent of a UDHS graduate, we also have a DHMS student, I am also a School Board Director. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of UD Rising.
- I am a Judge in Upper Darby for the last 17 years. My daughter goes to Garrettford. I care deeply about the education of all of our children.
- Hello All. I serve on the School Board. My daughter is in 7th grade at BH and my sons are proud graduates of UD. I look forward to a great session today. Thank you for attending!
- I was formed in UDSD and love Upper Darby.
- UDHS graduate. my little brother goes to UDHS. Also my little brother and sister goes to Westbrook Elementary
- I also have a child in Beverly Hills Middle School in 8th grade
- This is the first year of my children going to the Upper Darby School District and so far they have been enjoying district.

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORDS 'UPPER DARBY SCHOOLS,' WHAT WORDS OR PHRASES IMMEDIATELY COME TO MIND? (DON'T OVERTHINK IT; GIVE US YOUR HONEST FIRST REACTIONS.)

- Need better resources
- Diversity
- Diversity
- Too many students
- great schools
- Diverse

- Culture
- Diversity, the arts, large, caring
- Equity
- Opportunity
- diversity
- diversity
- unity
- Gets an unjust "bad rap"
- Questionable
- great opportunities, diversity
- improving
- a lot with little
- diverse
- Trying to make a difference
- Successful alumni
- amazing and diversity
- hardworking
- more bus services needed,
- I see good education and progress for kids
- resources
- hardworking and underfunded
- communicative
- diversity
- we think of a large, diverse student population in overcrowded schools. We live in the neighborhood that is between Lansdowne & East Lansdowne so our neighborhood along with Fernwood doesn't truly have a home school. The closest elementary school is Stonehurst & currently our kids all go to Charles Kelly. We feel this neighborhood doesn't get much attention & the needs & concerns of the neighborhood aren't understood.

BASED ON YOUR GROUP'S DISCUSSION, WHAT'S YOUR BEST ONE-SENTENCE PIECE OF ADVICE TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT?

- Keep listening to the community.
- Act on the suggestions from the community
- Everyone keep showing up to build relationships and create a brighter future.
- Continue approaching this with all stakeholders
- People want to work together
- Keep these kinds of lines of communication open- this was really awesome!
- Open communication and shared resources across the district.

- Teach respect and focus on education rather than worrying about undefined "diversity." Also, update the crumbling facilities.
- Reach the pocket neighborhoods, break the isolation.
- Keep doing what they are doing.
- Defined what diversity is for UDSD
- Communicate as many reports and details about UDSD activities and successes as possible.
- let the community make changes not just listen
- respect Everyone's Culture.
- Facilitate breaking barriers within the district
- Continue this process and advocate equity in resources
- We need to bring our multiculturalism/diversity back as a celebration. For example years ago we had the international bazaar, diversity was taught in curriculum and there were experiential lessons.
- communication equality and voices heard
- The staff needs more training on diversity
- Continue to listen to the parents and community and give feedback so they know they have been heard and understood.
- model the behavior you want to see from students and staff, listen before decisions are made and be transparent about why certain decisions are made , and be open to being wrong
- Communicate more
- Transparency around the budget and spending
- Hold more collective community events, including bringing together all schools. Explore combined elementary schools activities
- More transparency with parents, maybe coming up with a community monthly meeting for teachers and family to communicate more regularly
- Work on school and parent collaboration to improve and handle the problems that are happening. With collaboration comes understanding and unity.
- We discussed pooling resources in our group also
- Listen, learn, do
- to acknowledge the community's opinion, let us know you're listening.
- This was a start but the district has a long way to go and needs to start hearing parents that do reach out when they reach out.
- That came up in our group as well
- learn more about one another culture wise
- It spurs more laziness.
- Continue to include the community informed.
- Working on better communication with parents, teachers, student, and community
- WAWA hoagie coupons are great
- I would advise the district to address bullying as a national matter and stop the circle. Improving the means of communication between the district and parents will help. Help parents to understand the positive impact of diversity

- Please relabel Christopher Columbus Day as Indigenous People Day! We need to acknowledge the truth and help everyone feel included.
- District-wide field trip/activity committee with educators and parents.
- define, implement, hold accountable use word “Diversity” for UDSD.
- Consider having projects year round for the diverse groups that attend the district.
- financial literacy education in schools in our communities to combat social economic disparities.
- more accountability by all stakeholders followed by empathy and compassion
- respect each other

