ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NEEDS ANALYSIS

PREPARED BY:

NASB
Nebraska Association of
SCHOOL BOARDS

Overview

This Needs Analysis was created as part of the Community Engagement process conducted between November 2017 and February 2018. The Community Engagement process was initiated at the request of the Arlington Public Schools Board of Education and Superintendent, Lynn Johnson, and facilitated by the Nebraska Association of School Boards ("NASB"). The Needs Analysis outlines the district's current state based on the data collected through the Community Engagement process, identified needs, and offers initial recommendations the leadership team may wish to consider when planning for long-term growth of the school district.

Arlington Public Schools

The Arlington School District No. 24 located across portions of Washington, Dodge, and Douglas counties including the communities of Arlington, Kennard, and Elk City and surrounding areas. Arlington is classified a Class III district by the Nebraska Department of Education and a Class C district by NSAA. The district has a 2017-2018 enrollment of approximately 650 students from Pre-K through 12th Grade.

Report Introduction

Community Engagement Process

As a publicly elected body, one of the most vital roles of the Board of Education is to gather opinions and take direction from its community on issues related to students, their academic achievement, and the environment in which they learn. While it is the board's responsibility to establish a vision as well as operational and instructional goals for the district, it should regularly engage members of its community to ensure that those goals align with the community's values and aspirations for the school district. In short, Community Engagement is an opportunity for the district to engage stakeholders for feedback and to help envision a path to improvement and growth.

This type of school improvement planning creates the opportunity to establish a school-based action plan built on the needs identified in the district. Chief among these are the needs of the students themselves. What do our students need to be safe, nurtured, challenged, and prepared for the future? Beyond the student needs, the process also seeks to determine what our teachers and staff need to do their jobs effectively as well as what our community expects from our school district. In order to identify these priorities in the Arlington Public School District, the district embarked upon a community-wide discussion

about our district and its future direction. We gathered as many opinions, concerns, suggestions, and hopes for the district as our community was willing to share with us.

What is the Needs Analysis?

This needs analysis is the distillation of all of the data the Association collected through the Community Engagement process. We compiled all of the feedback shared with the district to determine what the most pressing needs are in the district currently, and what are likely to be priorities moving forward. These "Identified Needs" will inform the Board of Education and district administration as they collaborate to create an action plan to optimize the district's organizational effectiveness through goals for improving and growing the school district.

Developing the Needs Analysis

The Needs Analysis was developed over the course of the Community Engagement process carried out between November 2017 and February 2018. To gather the needed data, NASB facilitated conversations with diverse stakeholder groups conducted in large group meetings, interviews, and surveys. The results are outlined in the following sections of this report.

Description of Data Gathered

Stakeholder Groups

In November 2017, NASB's facilitators with the assistance of district administrators developed a Community Engagement survey to re-engage patrons and to gather input. The purpose of this community survey enabled the board to obtain feedback to formulate operational and instructional goals that reflect the community's values. In addition, it also provided the board with an opportunity to share how feedback from the original Community Engagement Meetings shaped our current reality. While the survey link was made available through email and the school district website, patrons also had the opportunity to complete a hard copy survey and deliver/mail to the district office. All hard copy surveys were scanned and emailed directly to the Association to include in the summary. The survey included the following questions:

1. Identify the points of pride and/or strengths of the school district.

2. Identify the challenges that may impact the district in the next three to five years.

3. As a district patron, what are your expectations and priorities for the school district?

4. What are options for expanded programs or course offerings that the board of education should consider? Are there programs or course offerings that the board should consider eliminating?

5. Upkeep of facilities, grounds, and transportation require an on-going commitment of resources. Are there specific needs in this area that you would encourage the board to prioritize?

6. What forms of communications do you feel are most effective in keeping patrons informed and/or involved (i.e., district newsletter, daily announcements, email, school website, *Arlington Citizen*)?

7. Arlington Public Schools currently shares softball facilities, baseball facilities, and before/after school care program with outside agencies (Arlington Youth Sports, Village of Arlington, Washington County Agricultural Society, Fremont YMCA). Are there other shared endeavors that you would encourage the board to consider?

The Association compiled a Community Engagement Summary of the 29 completed surveys received. Drawing from the feedback received to the Community Engagement Survey, NASB facilitators identified principles and priorities of importance to the community. The Identified Priorities included:

Academics
- [ ] Maintain academic success
- [ ] Sustain efficient class size and teacher ratio
- [ ] Addition of technology, trades, and online coursework

What role will the community play in the identified priorities?
(e.g., parent volunteers, mentorships, internships, job shadowing, Community Job/Interest Fair, TeamMates, Student Mentors)

Community Support Structures
- [ ] Establish and sustain an effective Alumni Association
- [ ] Establish and sustain an effective School District Foundation

Identify successful strategies for engaging and fostering positive working relationships with all community members and families.

Expanded Learning Opportunities
- [ ] District Preschool
- [ ] Summer School Program
- [ ] YMCA Before and After School Program

Are the current expanded learning opportunities sufficient or do we have a need for expansion?

Facilities
- [ ] Adequate space to support continued/potential growth
- [ ] Additional classrooms to support student enrollment
- [ ] Sports facilities (wrestling room and baseball complex)

Prioritize and identify successful strategies for how the school district will address the identified needs.

The community identified priorities were then presented for discussion at a Community Engagement Meeting held on December 7, 2017.

Following the December Community Engagement Meeting, the school board instructed the Association to allow patrons to participate in a second survey utilizing the original questions.   The questions were then published for community input in mid-February 2018. In this second round, an additional 51 community members participated.

On January 15, NASB's Facilitator met with certified staff members and guided them through a process in which the staff discussed and answered a series of 18 questions covering district strengths, challenges, student needs, district programs, and district culture and climate. A total of 46 certified staff members participated in the engagement session. A classified specific questionnaire consisting of seven questions was distributed to the district's classified staff, and 29 staff members participated. The facilitator used an interview format to gather information from administrators and students.

Summary of Identified Priorities

At each stage of the Community Engagement process, the various stakeholder groups raised many strengths, points of pride, and accomplishments and positive attributes of the district. The purpose of this Needs Analysis; however, is to summarize the needs and challenges that emerged through the Community Engagement process. The facilitator reviewed the information from all the stakeholder groups and created a summary of priorities. They are numbered for convenience, but do not appear in any specific order.

No.	Summary of Priorities
1	Growth of student enrollment – mitigate negatives, capitalize on positives
2	Maintain optimal class sizes
3	Recruit and retain highly qualified teaching staff
4	Continue to maintain high academic standards
5	Ensure student safety
6	Expand district programs and activities
7	Build community support structures
8	Improved social-emotional/behavioral support for students
9	Greater access to counselors
10	Additional training for teachers in Social-Emotional/Behavioral Health
11	Improve the effectiveness of staff professional development
12	Ensure that the district provides a positive engaging working environment for all staff
13	Improve technology training for teachers
14	Improve effectiveness of SPED Program
15	Increase availability of interventions for Reading and Math

Board Leadership

Summary of Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations based upon the identified needs stated above. The recommendations are not intended to be final. They are proposed based on the data that was collected through the Community Engagement process and, in some instances, were offered as suggestions by the stakeholders providing the data. The recommendations may be considered as a starting point for discussion.

No.	Summary of Recommendations
1	Study projected growth within the district, determine sustainable enrollment at all grade levels, set option enrollment limits/goals.
2	Review current best practices and recommendations for appropriate student/teacher ratios in all grade levels / subject areas.
3	Draft teacher recruiting/hiring process to ensure all open positions attract the highest possible number of qualified applicants.
4	Review pay, and benefits offered by surrounding and regional school districts to ensure compensation remains competitive.
5	Regularly audit all available academic achievement data to identify and address areas of deficiency.
6	Conduct a safety and security audit; revise procedures and facilities as necessary to ensure safety.
7	Audit all existing programs and activities to determine where resources can be best utilized.
8	Create and launch an APS Alumni Association and/or School Foundation with purposeful engagement and development goals.
9	Increase student access to a counselor in the district; study full-time position and cooperation with external organizations to provide counseling services.
10	Consider adding a full-time behavior specialist to the district staff.
11	Include additional training in Social-Emotional/Behavioral matters to the district's professional development schedule.
12	Consider adding more grade-level, subject specific, and instruction-focused professional development to the existing schedule.
13	Increase opportunities for positive interaction between administration and teaching staff and classified staff including administration recognition of staff accomplishments.
14	Build more technology training and follow-up training into the professional development schedule.
15	Review staffing levels in SPED program including teachers and paraprofessionals to ensure appropriate support for current needs.
16	Study the expansion of reading and math interventions, determine costs and likely outcomes, expand if possible.

Next Steps

The Board of Education and district administrative leadership, working with NASB facilitators, will work to prioritize the identified needs as a result of the Community Engagement process. In this prioritization process, the leadership will consider each need in the context of the following criteria:

- What is the identified need that if addressed will result in positive and purposeful change?
- Who is most affected by this need?
- What is the magnitude or scope of the need?
- How does the need affect student academic performance?
- What are the root causes of the identified need? Can the root cause(s) be addressed?
- Which identified needs are high-priority? What evidence or data supports the highest-priority needs?
- What do stakeholders perceive is needed to address the identified need?

Following the prioritization of needs, district leadership will engage the appropriate stakeholder groups to further develop strategies to address the community identified needs. The strategies will be integrated into the board's goals for the district and will be used to guide the board's decision making over the next three to five-year period.

Board Leadership